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# an introduction to PURANAS

RAJ KUMAR PRUTHI

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# An Introduction to The *Puranas*

Raj Kumar Pruthi

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1836

# Forthcoming titles by Raj Kumar Pruthi to be published by UBSPD

1. An Introduction to the *Vedas*
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# Meaning and Characteristics

Etymologically the term *Purana* means 'That which lives from ancient times' (*vayu*). Matsya described the *Puranas* as 'containing the records of past events'. Originally, therefore, the term signified 'ancient tale' or 'old narrative' in the Brahmana literature, as compared with *itihasa* and *narashamsi*; later it became associated with a class of literature. Though in times of antiquity there was no *Purana* literature, the *Puranas* in the form of legendary lore existed even prior to the revelation of the *Vedas*.

References in the *ArtharvaVeda* imply that the *Puranas* had assumed some independent form of composition, but it is not clear whether at that time the *Puranas* meant actual books. The *Chhandogya-Upanishad*, however, shows that a definite work was intended by the term, but it is only in the *sutras* that we find reference to the existence of the real *Puranas*. Both *Itihasa* and *Purana* denoted history and both are mentioned together in Vedic literature, sometimes as separate and sometimes as compound words, but almost always associated with *gathas*, *narashamsis*, *vakovakyas*, etc., which were all subjects of study in those days. In the later Vedic Age, *Itihasa* preponderated over *Purana*, but gradually the latter asserted itself.

The characteristics of the *Puranas* were mentioned by Amarasimha in his classical definition of the term in the 5th century AD, which is also found in some *Puranas*.

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Amarya defined *Purana* as having five characteristics or *panchalakshana*, which are:

1. *Sarga* (creation),
2. *Pratisarga* (dissolution and recreation),
3. *Vamsha* (divine genealogies),
4. *Manvantara* (ages of Manus), and
5. *Vamshanucharita* (genealogies of kings).

A variant has world geography in place of genealogies of kings.

None of the existing *Puranas* is in complete agreement with this definition; some contain much more than these points, while others scarcely touch these points and deal with other topics. Moreover, *Panchalakshana* occupies an insignificant part (about 1/40) of the extant *Puranas*.

Thus, it appears that religious instruction was not one of their primary aims, nor were they originally composed for sectarian purposes. These and other later additions such as description of gifts, religious observances, sacred places, etc., which now form the bulk of the *Puranas*, render the *Panchalakshana* definition merely theoretical.

The *Puranas* overcame this difficulty by stating that the *panchalakshana* definition applied only to the *Upa Purana* (minor *Purana*), and that the *Maha Purana* (major *Purana*) should have ten characteristics or *dashalakshana*, which include the following additional topics: *vritti* (means of livelihood), *raksha* (incarnation of gods), *mukti* (final emancipation), *hetu* (*jiva*, unmanifest) and *apashraya* (Brahman).

These characteristics, however, leave out of account several features of the *Puranas*, such as glorification of

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Brahma, Vishnu, Surya and Rudra, dissolution and preservation of the world, *dharma* (righteous conduct), *artha* (economics and polity), *kama* (erotics) and *moksha* (emancipation). Even this comprehensive definition of the *Matsya* does not cover the entire ground traversed by the *Puranas*.

The *Purana* tradition, like that of *Mahabharata*, has all along been floating and dynamic, and the texts have been subjected to numerous revisions, additions, omissions and modifications. Antiquity is the only characteristic of a *Purana*. "Anything old may be the subject of a *Purana*," observes Haraprasad Shastri, "and it covers all the aspects of life."

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# Age of the *Puranas*

There is no doubt that the *Puranas* embody the earliest traditional history and that much of their material is old and valuable. Hence, there would be no justification for rejecting the evidence of the *Puranas in toto*.

Modern scholarship has varied its attitude towards the *Puranas* at different times. At the beginning of the Indic studies in the last decades of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, the *Puranas* were regarded as of no historical value on account of the confused conglomeration of their legendary and historical events as also for their peculiar ideas of 'ages'.

The confirmation of the Puranic statement about the source of the Nile by its actual discovery by Captain Speke in Nubia (Kusa dvipa) turned the tide in favour of the *Puranas*. But the study of inscriptions and coins inaugurated in India at about the same time, tended to minimise the value of the *Puranas* and, in some respects, contradicted the tradition, proving it to be wrong. The Buddhist texts also ran counter to the accounts in the *Puranas* in some particulars. All these tended to raise suspicion and disbelief about the *Puranas*.

In the early decades of the 19th century, HH Wilson made a systematic study of the *Puranas* and brought out an English translation of the *Vishnu Purana* with an exhaustive introduction and critical and comparative notes which attracted the attention of European scholars to this important branch of Sanskrit literature.

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The *Puranas*, rescued from unmerited oblivion, came to be considered as worthy of credence when corroborated by independent evidence. It was not, however, till the early decades of the 20th century that the patient and sustained research of FE Pargiter placed before the world a critical survey of the historical material of the *Puranas*.

VA Smith proved that the *Matsya* account of the Andhras is substantially correct. Scholars have found that the *Vishnu* version about the Mauryas and the *Vayu* version about the early Guptas merit credence, and the *Puranas* now are regarded as worthy of more serious attention than they have hitherto received.

The present view is to accept the *Puranas* as one of the important sources of traditional history of ancient India. Nowadays the *Puranas* are being critically studied in order to extract historical data therefrom, and modern historians have used Puranic material in their works.

The importance of the *Puranas* for the comprehensive history of Indian culture and civilisation is immense, as it has sections dealing with polity, sociology, administrative institutions, fine arts, architecture, etc. The function of a modern historian should be to disentangle legendary, fictitious or mythological material from the purely historical or cultural data.

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# Contents of the *Puranas*

## Cosmogony

The *Puranas* contain various accounts of the creation of the world. According to one account, when the self-existent *brahman*, who exists in three successively proceeding forms—*purusha, pradhana* and *kala*—enters *purusha* and *pradhana, mahat* or *buddhi* is produced from *pradhana*. *Buddhi* produces *ahankara* and so are produced the five subtle elements (*tan matras*), the gross elements (*bhutas*) and the 11 organs (*jnanendriyas, karmendriyas* and *manas*).

The highest deity invested with activity (*guna rajas*) known as Brahma creates all beings; the same deity with the purity (*sattva guna*), known as Vishnu, preserves the universe, and in the awful form Rudra with darkness (*tamo guna*) destroys it.

This creation lasts for a day of Brahma which is equal to 14 *manvantaras*. At the close of each *manvantara*, the life of inferior creatures and lower worlds comes to an end, leaving the substance of the entire universe, gods and sages unharmed. After the end of the 14th *manvantara*, when Brahma's day closes, occurs the great dissolution called *naimittika-pratisarga*, in which all things come to an end by fire and water, from which only the *prakrita* (creation) escapes, including the three qualities and seven *rishis*.

At the end of Brahma's night lasting for a *kalpa*, he wakes and begins his creation again. All the *prakrita*

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(creation) disappears only at the *prakrita pralaya*, occurring at the end of the life of Brahma, when not only all the gods and all other forms are annihilated, but the elements are again merged into primary substance, besides which only the spiritual being exists.

The explanation of these theories involves a consideration of the question of *yugas, manvantaras*, etc. A human year is a day and night of the gods; 12,000 divine years or 4,320,000 human years constitute *chaturyuga* (four ages) or *mahayuga* (great age) which is divided into four ages of progressive deterioration in the ratio of 4:3:2:1, respectively, for *krita, treta, dvapara* and *kali*.

Each of these *yugas* is preceded and followed by *sandhyas* containing a tenth of the period of a *yuga*. 1,000 *chaturyugas*, that is 4,320,000 human years are equivalent to a day or night of Brahma, which is called a *kalpa* (aeon). Each *kalpa* comprises the periods of 14 *Manus*—fathers of mankind—each of whom presides over 71 *chaturyugas* with a surplus.

## The Aims of Life

Most of the *Puranas* admit *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha* as the four aims of life. *Dharma* includes religious teachings, both Brahmanical and popular. Sin, punishment, penance and hell are described in some detail. A popular teaching consists of descriptions of *tirthas* (holy places) and of pilgrimages, as also of *vrata* (religious observances) and *dana* (gifts)—the chief feature of all these being that they were available to all, including women and *shudras*, to whom the *Vedas* were denied.

*Artha*, or the acquisition of wealth or polity, is found in the *Rajadharma* section of many *Puranas* dealing with

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the duties of kings and methods of administration, conduct of war and peace, etc.

*Kama* includes marriage rules and duties of the wife and women, which are illustrated by stories such as those of Sita and Savitri, who are cited as examples of perfect womanhood.

*Moksha*, or final emancipation, is the aim placed before every human being. Transmigration is an article of faith; one can attain deliverance from the chain of successive rebirths by following the path of *Yoga* and *Bhakti*. Yoga includes *Jnanayoga* and *Karmayoga*, while *Bhakti* is generally associated with Vishnu and Krishna.

## The Puranas and the Kshatriya Tradition

That the *Puranas* represent a *Kshatriya* tradition, as distinct from the *Brahmana* tradition of the *Vedas*, is accepted by many scholars following FE Pargiter, who based his theory on two assumptions:

1. The heroes of the *Puranas* are *Kshatriya* kings, most of whom are not mentioned in the *Vedas*.
2. The *Puranas* were transmitted by the *Sutas*, who were of *Kshatriya* origin.

There is absolutely no foundation for these beliefs. The *Suta* was a venerable *Brahmana*. The *Kshatriya* and *Brahmana* traditions were at no time two water-tight compartments. Even in the works distinctly assigned to *Kshatriya* tradition by Pargiter we find glorification of the *Brahmanas*, and the so-called Brahmanic literature abounds in *Kshatriya* legends.

The *Puranas* assign a comparatively small portion to genealogical accounts, the genuine *Kshatriya* tradition according to Pargiter; their main bulk deals with Vedic

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and Brahmanic lore, to which indeed the earliest reference to *Purana* is made. Moreover, the Puranas follow the Vedic religion and take pride in styling themselves as the "fifth *Veda*".

According to Pargiter, the *Puranas* as we have them now, are undeniably Brahmanic compilations; so no part can be partitioned as Brahmanic and *kshatriya* traditions. These are not two distinct sets of traditions; both are Brahmanical, produced under different environments with different aims and objects.

### Vedic Texts and The *Puranas*

There are differing opinions among scholars regarding the comparative value of the historical data supplied by the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. Priority of date and comparative freedom from textual corruption are doubtless two strong points in favour of Vedic texts. The *Puranas*, however, cannot be ruled out absolutely because despite a good deal of what is untrustworthy in them, it is absurd to suppose that fiction completely ousted the truth.

As the *Vedas* and the *Puranas* were produced under different circumstances and with different aims and objects, there would naturally be some differences in the accounts recorded in them. It will be seen, however, that there is practically no contradiction or conflict in the Vedic texts and the *Puranas*.

The *Rig Veda* is a Kuru-Panchala product and naturally kings belonging to that country play prominent roles in it while others find only incidental mention. Kings mentioned in the *Vedas* but not in the *Puranas* possibly belonged to smaller dynasties, whose names were therefore not preserved in the latter.

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There is also the possibility of the same person being referred to under different names in the two sets of traditional accounts. Some of the kings mentioned in the *Rig Veda* can be fitted in the gaps in the Puranic lists.

The *Rig Veda* no doubt offers proper corrective to the Puranic lists; but, when we find that Puranic accounts corroborated Vedic evidence, it is legitimate to take their testimony as valid in matters on which the *Rig Veda* is silent.

The proper procedure for the writing of traditional history is to take into account the joint testimony of the Vedic and the Puranic texts wherever available and to try to bring harmony into the conflicting texts. The evidence of the *Puranas* in these matters needs very careful consideration.

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# Origin and Development

The *Puranas* contain different legendary and mythological accounts of their origin. Modern scholars also have expressed different views regarding their origin. But tracing the genesis and development of the legendary lore from the earliest times to the period when the *Puranas* attained the status of 18 *Maha Puranas*, it appears that up to the period of the *Artharva Veda*, the *Puranas* signified only tales of yore, and were allied with *itihasa, gatha, narashamsis*, etc. It is doubtful whether the term then conveyed any class of Puranic literature.

The *Puranas* in the Vedic age were compiled by the *Suta* from the Vedic *Vamsha, Akhyana*, etc. This *Suta* was a holy and venerable *Brahmana*, quite distinct from the *Suta* of the *Dharmashastra*, who was the son of a *Kshatriya* father and *Brahmana* mother.

The Bharata war was an important landmark in the development of the *Puranas*, because their canon was fixed some four generations after the war and the genealogical accounts subsequent to this period were designed as 'future' in the *Puranas*.

The next stage may be found in the Upanishadic period when chapters on cosmogony, which incorporate the Sankhya and Upanishadic ideas, were added in the *Puranas* along with those on the ages of the Manus. The self-contradictory title *Bhavishyat Purana*, employed by Apastamba, indicates that in the period of the *Sutras* the term *Purana* had become so specialised as to have

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lost its proper meaning and become merely a designation for a particular class of books.

The *Puranas* of those days probably gave rise to the *Panchalakshana* definition, and discussions of Hindu rites and customs, such as *varnashramadharma, shraddha, dana, diksha, vratas, tirthas,* etc., which are strictly the domain of the *Smritis* and *Dharmashastras,* were incorporated in the *Puranas* not later than the middle of the 4th century AD.

Liberties have all along been taken with the text of the *Puranas,* the particular ambition of the later compilers being to make the *Puranas* all-comprehensive and encyclopaedic like the *Mahabharata*—and every successive generation has tried to make the *Puranas* up-to-date by various devices.

The chronological system of fitting in 71 four-age periods making a *manvantara* in the cosmological scheme is purely hypothetical and a later elaboration. The idea of four ages seems to be an early one. Various theories have been put forth by scholars for explaining the *yugas* and *manvantaras,* but no satisfactory explanation of the *manvantara chaturyuga* theory has yet come forth.

The division of time into four ages (*yugas*)—*Krita, Treta, Dvapara* and *Kali*—according to Pargiter, had a historical basis though later speculations have elaborated it into an amazing yet precise scheme of cosmogony. This theory of the four ages applies only to India and not to the whole world, and thus the further elaboration of these ages in the 71 four-age periods making up a *manvantara* is evidently a later development.

Great wars, conquests or political changes may have marked the end of one age and the beginning of another.

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The *Krita* age appears to have ended with the destruction of the Haihayas and the *Treta* age began with the reign of Sagara. Rama Dasharathi is said to have lived in the interval between the *Treta* and *Dvapara* ages. The Bharata war has been taken as having occurred at the close of the *Dvapara* age, and the *Kali* age began after the war. These ages thus symbolise changes in the political conditions in India.

Taking an average of 18 years for each generation, it may be stated that the *Krita* age covered (40 x 18) 720 years, *Treta* (25 x 18) 450 years, and *Dvapara* (30 x 18) 540 years, or that the historical period in India begins about 1,800 years before the Bharata war.

### Cosmography

The account of the first Manu includes a description of the universe over which he ruled. Like chronology, most of the description is imaginary. The world is said to consist of seven concentric continents separated by encircling seas of different substances such as butter, milk, etc. The innermost of the seven continents separated from the next by salt-water is *Jambu dvipa,* which alone was subject to the law of *Chaturyugas.*

The most important region of *Jambu dvipa* is *Bharatavarsha* or India, so called because the descendants of the Bharatas reside there. *Bharatavarsha* lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains containing the seven main chains of mountains named Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Suktimat, Riksha, Vindhya and Pariyatra. The *Kiratas* live on the east, the Yadavas on the west, and the *Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* and *Shudras* in the centre of *Bharatavarsha.*

Detailed lists have been given of the rivers flowing from the Himalayas and the seven mountain chains as

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also of several tribes inhabiting the various regions. The *Mahabharata* and other works also contain similar lists. The mention of Yavanas, Shakas and Pallavas, who came to India in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, and of the Hunas, who broke up the Gupta empire in the 6th century AD, indicates that the geographical lists were brought up-to-date from time to time.

### Dynastic Lists

The *Puranas* begin their dynastic lists with Manu, the saviour of humanity from The Flood. Vaivasvata Manu, the first king, had ten sons, among whom was divided the whole country. Ninety-five generations ruled between the time of Manu and the Bharata war. After the Bharata war, the *Puranas* use the future tense for the subsequent dynasties. They are called 'dynasties of the *Kali* age', mentioned only in seven *Puranas*, where their account is traced till about the period of the Guptas and the Andhras.

### Theology

The theology preached is heterogeneous. In preference to the Vedic deities, of whom only Indra and Agni retain their premier positions, popular deities are praised in the *Puranas*. The three chief gods are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Varuna becomes the lord of the ocean, while his twin Mitra disappears. Sun is highly extolled in some *Puranas*, but details of his worship are given in the *Bhavishya*. Yama, the god of the dead, punishes the sinners in his hells. *Gandharvas* and *apsaras* are celestial musicians and nymphs. Under demons are classed the *asuras, daityas, danavas* and *rakshasas*.

Of the Trinity, Brahma is the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. Sectarian *Puranas*

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preach the supremacy either of Vishnu or of Shiva, but generally, the older *Puranas* glorify also the rival deity. The high watermark of catholicity is found in the monotheistic teaching enunciating the unity of all three, and worship of any one of them according to the preference of the worshipper.

**Incarnations**

Ten incarnations of Vishnu appear in most of the *Puranas*, of which five (Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha and Vamana) are mythological, four (Parashurama, Rama, Krishna and Buddha) are historical, while the last incarnation, Kalki, is yet to manifest. This *dashavatara* or ten-incarnation theory suggests the idea of an evolutionary process of human development. The fish (*matsya*) emerges out of the early Palaeozoic seas, followed by the tortoise (*kurma*) and boar (*varaha*) in the Mesozoic period. Next come the man-lion (*narasimha*) and dwarf (*vamana*) in the period of the cavemen and bushmen. Parashurama represents the nomadic or hunter stage, and Rama and Krishna the full-city civilisation.

In contrast to Vishnu, who dwells on the celestial plane except when incarnated, Shiva is a terrestrial god, forming part of the Indian pantheon since prehistoric days. His consort is Parvati, the Mother Goddess, and their sons are Skanda and Ganesha. The Pashupata cult, praised in the *Shaiva Puranas*, is denounced in others. The *linga* cult associated with Shiva and the *shakti* cult associated with its female counterpart appear only in the later *Puranas*.

There is also the worship of *pitris* (manes), who are said to comprise seven groups, sometimes ranking with gods. These *pitris* are connected with *shraddha* (funeral

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oblations), about which elaborate particulars are given in the *Puranas*.

Among the heretical systems Jainism and Buddhism are condemned. Vishnu appearing as *mayamoha* misguides the demons with the philosophies of ignorance and darkness, that is Jaina, Buddhist and Charvaka doctrines, the followers of which are included in the generic term *nanga* (naked). Kapalikas figure as the worst heretics.

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# Number and Classification

There are said to be 18 *Maha Puranas* and the same number of *Upa Puranas*. With a few exceptions, almost all *Puranas* give a uniform list of *Maha Puranas*, mostly in the following order:

Brahma
Padma
Vishnu
Bhagavata
Naradiya
Markandeya
Agni
Bhavishya
Brahmavaivarta
Varaha
Linga
Skanda
Vamana
Kurma
Matsya
Garuda
Brahmanda

Some *Puranas* read *Shiva* in place of *Vayu*, and *Devi Bhagava* instead of (*Vaishnava*) *Bhagavata*. Shiva is not a *Maha Purana;* there is also no reason for increasing the traditional number of the *Maha Puranas* by adding

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*Shiva, Vayu* and *Harivamsha*, as attempted by Pargiter and Farquhar.

There is, however, no uniformity in the enumeration of the *Upa Puranas* which are more sectarian in character, and of a composite nature. Their historical value is very little, being composed much later. From a collation of different lists, the following appear to be the 18 *Upa Puranas*:

Sanatkumara
Narasimha
Nanda
Shivadharma
Durvasa
Naradiya
Kapila
Vamana
Ushanas
Manava
Varuna
Kali
Maheshvara
Samba
Saura
Parashara
Maricha
Bhargava

RC Hazra has collected the names of about a hundred *Upa Puranas*, of which hardly 15 have appeared in print.

The *Puranas* can be classified into ancient and late according to their degree of conformity to the *Panchalakshana* definition. The less the number of

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additions to the five characteristics mentioned in the *Amarakosha*, the older the *Purana*. Judging from this test, we may pronounce *Vayu, Brahmanda, Matsya* and *Vishnu* as the ancient *Puranas*.

The *Maha Puranas* have further been subdivided according to their preferential treatment of Shiva, Vishnu, Agni, Surya and Brahma. A more satisfactory grouping, however, has as its basis the critical examination of the contents of the *Puranas* yielding the following types:

1. Those which contain all the abstracts of all great works in arts and sciences in Sanskrit, including the usual Puranic materials, such as *Garuda, Agni* and *Narada*.
2. Those which mainly deal with *tirthas* and *vratas* such as *Padma, Skanda* and *Bhavishya*.
3. Those which underwent two general revisions, such as *Brahma, Bhagavata* and *Brahmavaivarta*.
4. Historical *Puranas*, of which only one exists, namely *Brahmanda*.
5. Sectarian *Puranas*, such as *Linga, Vamana* and *Markandeya*, the first two being *Shaiva Puranas* while the last deals with *Devi*.
6. Old *Puranas* revised such as *Varaha, Kurma* and *Matsya*.

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## Eighteen *Puranas*

There are 18 main *Puranas* and an equal number of subsidiary *Puranas* or *Upa Puranas*. The main *Puranas* are: *Vishnu Purana, Naradiya Purana, Srimad Bhagavata Purana, Garuda (Suparna) Purana, Padma Purana, Varaha Purana, Brahma Purana, Brahmanda Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Markandeya Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Vamana Purana, Matsya Purana, Kurma Purana, Linga Purana, Siva Purana, Skanda Purana* and *Agni Purana*. Of these, six are *Sattvic Puranas* and glorify Vishnu; six are *Rajasic* and glorify Brahma; six are *Tamasic* and glorify Shiva.

Neophytes or beginners in the spiritual path are puzzled when they go through *Shiva Purana* and *Vishnu Purana*. In *Shiva Purana*, Lord Shiva is highly eulogised while an inferior position is given to Lord Vishnu. Sometimes Vishnu is belittled. In *Vishnu Purana*, Lord Hari is highly eulogised while an inferior status is given to Lord Shiva. Sometimes Lord Shiva is belittled. This is only to increase the faith of the devotees in their particular Ishta-Devata. Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu are one.

The best among the *Puranas* are *Srimad Bhagavata Purana* and *Vishnu Purana*. The most popular is the *Srimad Bhagavata Purana*. Next comes *Vishnu Purana*. A portion of the *Markandeya Purana* is well-known to all Hindus as *Chandi* or *Devimahatmya*. Worship of god as the divine mother is its theme. *Chandi* is read widely by the Hindus on sacred days and on *Navaratri* (Durga Puja) days.

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# The *Puranas* and History

Tradition and customs have played an important role in rewriting the history of the countries freed from colonial rule. The *Puranas* as sources for historical writing are being critically examined.

History in the modern sense of the term was unknown in ancient India in spite of the many-sided development of her civilisation and culture; but historical tradition, chiefly relating to dynastic lists and notable events in the lives of kings, used to be handed down from generation to generation from the most ancient times.

In the extant *Puranas* there are various indications which show definitely that particular care was taken in early times to study and preserve correctly the dynastic lists and accounts, which later came to be recorded more or less systematically in the *Puranas*. Out of the 18 works of the class, only six, namely, *Vayu, Brahmanda, Markandeya, Vishnu, Matsya* and *Bhagavata,* come from comparatively early dates and have more or less the character of early *Puranas*.

All these six works, as also those of the rest which contain genealogical lists and accounts, trace the different dynasties of ancient India to a common mythical ancestor, Vaivasvata Manu, son of Surya (the Sun). It has been said that Vaivasvata Manu had nine sons, of whom four were important, namely Iksvaku, Nabhanedistha, Saryati and Nabhaga.

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Iksvaku reigned in Ayodhya and had two sons—Vikuksi-Sasada and Nimi—from whom proceeded the dynasties of Ayodhya and Videha, respectively. The former dynasty, in which Rama, son of Dasaratha, was born in much later days, is better known as the Aiksvaku dynasty or the Solar race of Ayodhya.

Nabhanedistha reigned in Vaisali and founded the Vaisala dynasty; Saryati ruled in Anarta (Gujarat) and became the founder of the Saryata dynasty of that place; and from Nabhaga descended a line of kings of whom Rathitara became the ancestor of the Rathitaras.

Besides the sons mentioned above, Vaivasvata Manu had a daughter Ila or, according to some *Puranas*, a son Ila who was turned into a woman. Ila consorted with Budha, son of Soma (the Moon), and gave birth to a son, Pururavas Aila, who became the progenitor of the Aila or Lunar race of Pratisthana (Allahabad).

Pururavas Aila had six or seven sons, of whom Ayu (or Ayus) continued the main line at Pratisthana, and Amavasu became the founder of the dynasty of Kanyakubja (Kanauj). Ayu had five sons—Nahusa, Ksatravrddha (or Vrddhasarman), Rambha, Raji and Anenas—of whom Ksatravrddha founded the Kasi dynasty. Nahusa's son Yayati had five sons, who became the founders or distant ancestors of a large number of royal families, viz. the Haihayas, Yadavas (among whom Krishna was born), Turvasus, Druhyus, Anavas, Pauravas (among whom Yudhisthira and others were born), and so on.

Long lists of kings of these dynasties have been given in many of the extant *Puranas*; and if these lists were all perfectly true, some of them would go back to a time at least 2,000 years before the Kaurava-Pandava war of the *Mahabharata*.

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After the *Mahabharata* war, detailed dynastic lists of only three royal families, namely, the Aiksvakus, the Pauravas, and the kings of Magadha, continue to be given in the *Puranas* down to the time of Adhisimakrsna, who was sixth in descent from Arjuna, the hero of the great *Mahabharata* war. Of the other royal families, the extant *Puranas* contain incomplete accounts.

Besides the genealogies of kings of the 'past', which ended either with the *Mahabharata* war or, about a century later, with the reign of Adhisimakrsna, some of the extant *Puranas* give, in the form of prophecies, a number of lists of kings of 'future' *Kali yuga;* and in their accounts of such future kings the *Vayu, Brahmanda, Vishnu, Matsya* and *Bhagavata* include with the mention of the durations of rules of the different kings, a few dynasties of the historical period, viz., the Sisunagas, Nandas, Mauryas, Sungas, Kanvas, Andhras and Guptas, all so well known in Indian history.

The ancestors of these dynasties, except the Gupta dynasty, which has not been mentioned in the *Matsya Purana*, are followed by the enumeration of a series of other dynasties, mostly of low and barbarian origin (Abhiras, Gardabhilas, Sakas, Yavanas, Tusaras, Hunas, etc.) which were contemporaneous with the former.

After mentioning all these lines of kings, the *Puranas* give a dreary description of the social condition in northern India, which was consequent upon the foreign invasions and the spread of the non-Brahmanical and anti-Brahmanical religious systems. FE Pargiter has critically examined the texts of the five *Puranas* mentioned above and shown their importance in reconstructing the history of these dynasties.

Although, as the evidence of the Vedic, Buddhist, and other works as well as of the inscriptions has shown,

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there can be little doubt about the fact that ancient Indian historical tradition, as now found recorded in the *Puranas*, was in its origin very often based on facts, the connection of all these dynasties as given in the *Puranas*, except a few of the *Kali yuga*, with a common mythical ancestor is unconvincing.

It is also clear how myth has played an important part in the shaping of the genealogical lists and accounts of the extant *Puranas* from early times. As a matter of fact, the present *Puranas* came gradually to lose their ancient character from about the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier, and to turn into books of religious and social interest.

Genealogies of kings and sages were treated with increasing neglect and sometimes forged, and facts were unscrupulously and complacently mixed with fiction for pleasing common people. Consequently, the extant *Puranas* in their present forms have to be used with the greatest caution for any historical purpose.

Another difficulty which confronts every reader of the *Puranas* is the want of critical editions of these works. Not even the *Vayu Purana*, which is the most important of all the Puranic works, for its valuable contents, has been edited critically by comparing the manuscripts of different provinces of India.

It is only the intensive and comparative study of the *Puranas* based on highly critical editions which can help us to some extent in reconstructing the political history of pre-Buddhist India. But unfortunately most of the comparatively early Puranic works, or portions thereof, which were replaced by others of more recent dates, have been lost forever.

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# Geography in the *Puranas*

Among other subjects of interest dealt with in the present *Puranas* is geography, which came to be introduced from early times in connection with recreation; and many of the extant *Puranas* contain a few chapters each on this topic.

According to Puranic tradition, the earth consisted of seven *dvipas* or continents, namely:

1. *Jambu dvipa*
2. *Plaksa dvipa*
3. *Salmali dvipa*
4. *Kusa dvipa*
5. *Kraunca dvipa*
6. *Saka dvipa*
7. *Puskara dvipa*

Each of these was divided into a number of *varsas* or subcontinents. These *dvipas* were surrounded by seven oceans containing water which had the taste of salt, sugarcane-juice, wine, clarified butter, curd, milk and good drinking water.

The *Jambu dvipa*, which occupied the central position, had in its middle a golden mountain called Meru, from which a number of other mountains including the Himalaya radiated in different directions like the petals of a lotus. This *dvipa* was divided into

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nine *varsas* or subcontinents, one of which was *Bharata-varsa* (India).

The *Puranas* supply information about all the seven *dvipas*—about their measurements, their mountains and rivers, their residents, their presiding deities, the longevity and general standard of morality of the people, and other details, but give special attention to the description of *Jambu dvipa* and, more particularly, of *Bharatavarsa*, which in early times occupied a much bigger area than at present, and which has been praised as the *karma bhumi* (place of work) for those who aspire for heaven or final liberation.

Although the chapters on geography in spite of later modifications, still contain much valuable information about the topography of the ancient world, especially of India, it is rather disappointing to find that the Puranic geographical tradition also, like the dynastic accounts, has been influenced considerably by mythology.

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# Brahma Purana

This is in the form of teachings by Brahma to Daksa and contains 10,000 verses. This is also called *Adi Purana*. There is a special treatise in this book on Orissa, an ancient holy region of Bharata. There is in this a special annexure explaining the intimacy between Shiva and Surya which is a deviation from other *Puranas*. *Brahma Purana* talks about a *suryakshetra* (sun-temple) situated at a place called Konarka near the holy place of Puri, installed there in 1241 AD. If this *Purana* along with *Jaladhenu* is given as a gift on the full-moon day in the month of *Vaisakha* (May) the donor will attain heaven.

*Brahma Purana* contains two parts—*Purva Bhaag* and *Uttar Bhaag*. *Purva Bhaag* contains tales of creation and descriptions of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna.

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*Uttar Bhaag* contains a detailed description of Purshottam Tirtha prominent among all the holy places.

Even before the creation of the universe took place, Brahma had appeared on a lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu who himself was resting on Sheshnaag. Brahma began to wonder about the origin of the lotus flower because as far as he could see, there was nothing but water.

Curious to know about the origin of that lotus flower, he entered into the hollow stem and endeavoured for thousands of years, but the stem seemed endless. Unsuccessful in his attempts, he came back among the petals of the lotus flower, dejected. At that moment, he heard a voice calling *'Tapa Tapa'*.

Understanding the meaning of that voice, Brahma began a long penance. As a result of his hard penance, his heart became pure and he had a divine glimpse of Lord Vishnu resting on Sheshnaag. Brahma greeted him respectfully. Accepting his greetings, Lord Vishnu gave Brahma sermons on the essence of the *Bhagwat*:

> Revered Brahma, I am unfolding the mysteries of that divine knowledge. Imbibe the knowledge about my appearance, my qualities, my activities, my emotions as it really is by my grace.
> I was present even before creation had taken place. Nothing was exclusive of me, the virtues, the non-virtues and even matters beyond these two basic qualities. I even exist during the period of dissolution. I am this creation and also all those things which survive after the period of dissolution. And those things which seem exclusive of me or exclusive of the soul understand it only as an illusion, just like an image of any object or darkness.

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Just as the five basic elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether) manifest in every object, big or small, but remain unseen themselves, in the same way I manifest myself in the whole universe but remain detached.

Those who are desirous of having the element of self-knowledge, need only to realise the fact that it is eternal knowledge which is present during the creation phase and the dissolution phase.

After preaching to Brahma with the help of four *shlokas*, Lord Vishnu emphasised its importance by saying, "Revered Brahma, contemplate on these thoughts in the state of supreme meditation and you will never be under the effects of any illusion while creating or making resolutions."

Like this, Brahma received the elementary knowledge of the self from Lord Vishnu before creation and, by the grace of Lord Vishnu, he realised the 'supremeness', his divine appearance, his divine qualities and his divine activities. Brahma gave this knowledge to Sage Narad by describing all the 24 incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Narad in turn imparted this knowledge to Sage Vyasa. Ultimately, Vyasa, after compiling that divine knowledge in 18,000 *shlokas*, made Shukadev read it. In this manner, *Srimad Bhagwat* was popularised in the whole world.

When the mother earth feels unable to bear the burden of the non-virtuous and sinful activities of the demons, she goes to Brahma along with other deities and prays to be relieved of her burden. Under the guidance of Lord Vishnu, Brahma gives the instructions to the deities to act accordingly. Hence, most of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu have happened due to Brahma's requests.

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Lord Vishnu, as an incarnation of *vamana* (dwarf), made the Demon King Bali promise to give as much land as could be measured in three steps. While measuring, Lord Vishnu showed his gigantic appearance with an enormous expansion of his physique. When Lord Vishnu lifted his leg it reached *Brahma Loka* (the abode of Brahma). Lord Brahma, realising it was the sacred leg of Vishnu, washed and worshipped it.

Lord Vishnu's nail tore some parts of the portion above *Brahma Loka*. As a result of this, water poured down from that portion which also fell on Lord Vishnu's feet. Brahma collected the water in his spout (*kamandalu*).

The water released from his spout after the penance of Sage Bhagiratha further was subdivided into three parts. The part which flows in heaven is Mandakini, the part flowing in the nether world is called Bhagwati and the part which is flowing on earth is the Ganges.

Brahma, while describing himself, said:

> My speech does not incline towards non-virtuousness, my mind never follows the path of non-virtuousness, my senses are not influenced by the non-virtuous desires because I always possess Lord Vishnu in my heart with great dedication.

This is the essence of the 'Bhagwat' religion. As long as man does not take refuge at the feet of Lord Vishnu, he suffers from fear, sorrow, greed and attachments, which are the root cause of his miseries.

Therefore, surrendering oneself before Lord Vishnu is the only means to achieve liberation from the bondage of the world.

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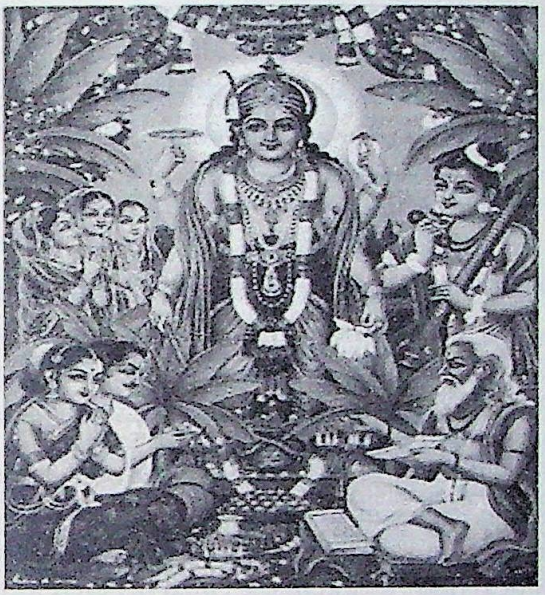
# *Vishnu Purana*



This is one of the most important of all the *Puranas* and contains the five technical divisions of the *Puranas*. It is divided into six *adisas*, deals with the events of *Varahakalpa* and contains 23,000 *shlokas*. The theme is the ten incarnations of Maha Vishnu. *Vishnu Purana* is the most ancient of all the *Puranas* and has got the name *Puranaratna* (gem of *Puranas*).

The method of narration is in the form of Sage Parasar teaching his disciple Maitreya. Since there is a reference in it to the Maurya dynasty, it is to be surmised that this was composed in the first or second century A.D. The narrator himself states thus:

> Vyasa adept in the compositon of *Puranas* composed this *Puranasarirhita* with *akhyanas, upikhyanas, githas*

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and *kalpanirnayas*. A *suta* named Romaharsana was Vyasa's chief disciple. The broad-minded Vyasa gave that *samhita* to that *suta*. Romaharsana had six disciples named Sumati, Agnivarcas, Mitrayus, Sarhsapiyana, Akrtavrana and Savarni. Of these, Akrtavrana, Savarni and Sarhsapiyana born in the Kasyapagotra have composed *Puranasamhitas*. There is yet another *sarirhita* composed by Romaharsana which was the basis of the *sarirhitas* of his three disciples. I have composed Vishnupurana basing on the above four *samhitas*.

If a man gives as a gift a book of *Vishnu Purana* on the full-moon day in the month of *asadha* (July) with *Jaladhenu* he will attain *Vishnupada*.

*Vishnu Purana* contains six parts. The first part narrates the creation of the universe, *pralay* and the churning of the sea. The second part contains a geographical description of the earth divided into seven islands. The third part describes the origin of Buddhism. The fourth part contains a description about the population of the earth from the beginning. The fifth part is entirely devoted to the life and plays of Lord Krishna. The sixth part contains the description of religion in *Kali yuga*.

**First Part**

This describes the creation of the universe, birth of the gods and the demons, *pralaya*, churning of the sea, tales of the devotee Dhruva, killing of Hiranyakashipu, etc.

**Second Part**

This contains the description of Priyavrata's sons and the Bharat dynasty. It also has a geographical description

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of Jambu dvipa, Bharata varsa, Shatdweep, Patal (the Hades), the sun and the planets, chariot of the sun, origin of the Ganges, etc.

**Third Part**

This contains a detailed description of *Manavantaras, Kalpa, Veda Vyasa*, religion, the caste system, etc. It also has a description of the origin of Buddhism.

**Fourth Part**

This describes the origin of Brahmanand Daksha, birth of Pururava, marriage of Balarama with Revati, birth of Iksvaku, the Kukutstha dynasty, tale of Yuvanashva and Saubhari, *Sarpvinasha mantra*, Narayana dynasty, birth of Sagar, Ashwamedha by Sagar, descendence of the Ganges through the penance of Bhagirath. Also the birth of Lord Rama, *yagya* of Vishwamitra, birth of Sita, tales of the Chandra dynasty, the abduction of Tara, origin of Agnitrayo, birth of Dhanvantri and his clan, wars with the demons, clan of Nahush, tale of Yayati, Yadu dynasty and birth of Kartveerya Arjun.

There are tales of Krishna's birth, marriage of Krishna with Jambvanti and Satyabhama, salvation of Shishupaal, overpopulation of Yaduvanshis, birth of Karna and his discovery by Adhirath, Janamejaya dynasty and origin of Bharat, clans of the Jahnu and Pandu, clan of Parikshit and royal dynasties of the future, future generations of the Iksvaku dynasty, Brihad dynasty, Pradyot dynasty, kingdom of Nand, advent of *Kali yuga* and description of the royal dynasties of *Kali yuga*.

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**Fifth Part**

Here we find descriptions of the marriage of Vasudev and Devaki, incarnation of Lord Vishnu to kill Kansa, arrival of Yagmaya in Yashoda's womb and of the Lord in Devaki's womb, birth of Lord Krishna, carrying of Krishna to Gokul, dialogue of Mahamaya with Kansa, acquiring of defensive stance by Kansa, releasing of Vasudeva and Devaki, killing of Putana, killing of Shakat, naming of Krishna and Balarama, humiliation of Kaliya, killing of Dhenukasura, killing of Pralamb, description of festival devoted to Indra, worshipping of Govardhana, arrival of Indra, killing of Arishtakasura, arrival of Narad in Kansa's court, killing of Keshi, arrival of Akrur in Vrindavana, arrival of Lord Krishna in Mathura, Lord Krishna's mercy on Kubja, arrival of Lord Krishna in amphitheatre and killing of Kansa.

Also described are: coronation of Ugrasena, bringing of Sudhama in Mathura, defeat of Jarasandha, birth of Kalayavan, killing of Kalayavan, Vrindavan tour by Balarama, attainment of Varuni by Balarama, abduction of Rukmani, abduction of Pradyumna, getting of Pradyumna by Mayavati, killing of Shambar by Pradyumna, killing of Rukmi by Balarama, attainment of 16,000 queens by Lord Krishna, abduction of Parijat, fight with Indra, begging for pardon by Indra, migration to Dwarka, bow battle, telling of dream by Usha, abduction of Aniruddha, fight with Lord Shiva, amputation of Bana by Lord Krishna, killing of Kashiraj Paundraka, putting of Varanasi on flames, abduction of Lakshmana, presentation of Samb before the sages as an expecting mother, origin of pestle, destruction of Yaduvansha, ascendance of Lord Krishna to heaven, beginning of *Kali yuga*, preaching of Arjun by Vyasa, coronation of Parikshit.

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**Sixth Part**

This contains description of religion in *Kali yuga*, description of the importance of *Kali yuga*, Shudra and womenfolk by Vyasa, description of Kalpa, description of a day of Brahma, position of Brahma in *Pralaya*, natural disasters, different kinds of sorrow, torturing in hell, awakening of Brahma, preaching of *yoga*, tale of Keshidhwaja, killing of the religion and the cow, holding of counsel by Khandikya, self-knoweldge, ridicule of body-spiritualism, queries of *yoga*, Brahmagyana (*Vedas*), concepts of tangible-intangible appearances of God, salvation of Khandikya and Keshidhwaja, excellence of *Vishnu Purana*, virtues of Lord Vishnu's names and results of hearing Lord's name.

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# *Shiva Purana*

This contains instructions by Shiva on *Dharma* sitting in the form of *linga* (phallus). The twenty-eight different forms of Shiva are described in this. It contains 11,000 verses. The old *Yayu Purana* has now been replaced by the *Shiva Purana*. If this book is given as a gift to a Brahmin with *tiladhenu* on the full-moon day in the month of *Phalguna* (March), the donor will attain *Shivasayujya*.

It contains the glory of Lord Nrismhadeva, Janardhana, the story of Ambarisha; the glories of Gayatri.

## Depiction of Lord Shiva's Appearance

Lord Shiva is reckoned as one among the *Tridevas* (trinity). Brahma is the creator, Lord Vishnu is the

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preserver and Lord Shiva is the destroyer. Shiva is the lord of *shakti* also.

*Vamange chavibhati bhudharasutadevayagamastake*
*Bhale bala vidhurgale cha garalam yasyorasivyalarata*
*Soayamam bhuti vibhushanah sura*
*Varamsarvadhiyah sarvada,*
*Sharvah savagatah shivam shashinimah*
*Shri shankarh shatumam*

(That Lord Shiva who has on his left side mother Parvati, who has the Ganges and the moon on his forehead, who has poison in the throat and cobras on the chest, such an ommipresence greater than the gods, Lord Shiva may protect me.)

Now, let us consider this scriptural form of Lord Shiva from a scientific view and see what god wants to preach to the common people.

**Why Jagdamba Parvati is on the Left of Shiva?**

Jagdamba Parvati is the form of power. Lord Shiva always keeps her on his left side because he himself remains in a state of *tapasya* (meditation). People, and scriptures too, assume that the left part of the male is inauspicious and trouble-causing, whereas Parvati is the form of power and thus always auspicious. Hence, in order to destroy all inauspiciousness and obstacles, Lord Shiva keeps Parvati on his left side. Besides, Lord Shiva is himself a form of inauspiciousness as:

*Amangalyam sheelam tavabhavatu*
*namaivamakhilam*
*Tathapi Smartrinama varada paramam mangamas*

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(It is famous in the whole world that Lord Shiva is inauspicious, but a giver of all kinds of auspiciousness for those who remember him. This virtue is because of Parvati's presence with him.)

Thus acting on the principle:

*Naryastu yatra pujyante ramante Tatra Devatah*

(That is Where the womenfolk are worshipped the gods stay there. Lord Shiva preaches the same to his devotees, that if they respect women, all the inauspiciousness, all hurdles would be removed automatically.)

**Why Mother Ganga is on the Head?**

The Ganges, the most sacred river in India, shows coolness, holiness and serenity. Lord Shiva holds her on his head, thus preaching to devotees that if they bear coolness, holiness and serenity in their head, i.e., if they give up anger, envy and disturbances that haunt their minds, they will achieve all kinds of perfection and successes.

**Why the New Moon is on the Forehead?**

The moon is a shining but cool, celestial body. Lord Shiva wears it on his forehead, thus preaching a peaceful mind and far-sightedness. If a decision is taken with a cool, peaceful mind and with far-sightedness, all the tasks will be completed successfully, resulting in an increment in one's honour.

**Meaning of Poison in the Throat**

When the gods and demons unitedly churned the sea, it was the poison that came out first. Seeing the lethal

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poison, both the gods and the demons got nervous, they approached Lord Shiva and prayed him to hold it. Lord Ashutosh (Shiva) agreed to their prayers and swallowed the deadly poison. That poison, however, did not reach his stomach, instead it stuck in the throat, turning it blue.

Thus, holding the poison in the neck, Lord Shiva preaches that one should not contain poison in his belly. This also means that one should not even wish ill for the others, leave apart doing ill. Speaking harsh words is, however, another thing, but one should not cultivate feelings of envy and enmity for others.

### Why is the Snake on the Chest?

It is not strange that people are usually scared of snakes because they are poisonous creatures. In scriptures and in practical life, the snake is given a name *Kaala*, i.e. death. But Lord Shiva bears snakes on his chest. Thus he preaches to people that if they do not engage their mind and intellect in the worship of god, death is always facing them. If you keep your mind and intellect busy in prayers and worship, even death can do no harm to you. Instead, it would become a means to adorn you.

The reason of having a snake around his chest is *vishasyaa vishamaushdhama*, i.e., the best antidote for poison is poison itself. Hence, to cancel the effect of poison, Lord Shiva has worn poisonous snakes around his shoulders.

### Why is Ox the Vehicle of Lord Shiva?

Scriptures assume the ox as an incarnation of Dharmraj, as is mentioned in *Parikshita Kaliyugaprasanga*, that *Kali*

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*yuga* is killing *dharma* which is in an oxen form. Sage Manu also writes:

*Vrisho hibhagawana dharmastasyayahkurut alum*
*Vrishanam tam vidurde vastasmaddhama na lopayeta*

(An ox is a different incarnation of the *Dharma* god, whoever kills it must be taken as a sinner. Hence, one must not cause the disappearance of *Dharma).* Riding the ox, Lord Shiva preaches to the people that:

*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah*

(The protected religion protects the follower. Hence, follow the religious path, no shield is better than this.)

**Description of Shiva Parivara**

*Shiva Parivara* is a conglomerate of strange things. Lord Shiva has the ox as his vehicle and the snake as a garland. As against it, Parvati, who is the form of shakti (power), has the lion as her vehicle. Lion is a natural enemy of the ox. Kartikeya's vehicle is a peacock, which is an enemy of the snake that adorns Lord Shiva's chest. Ganesh has the mouse as his vehicle. The mouse is a natural prey of the snake.

But amidst these strange diversities, Lord Shiva remains submerged in his *sadhana* with full concentration. In the world created by Lord Brahma, all creatures are different from one another. Hence, it is natural that their intellect and thoughts would be different as well. Thus, if unity is maintained in a combined family despite myriad diversities and controversies, the family would never face any wrath on the purpose of (*sadhana*) and the means (*sadhan*) to achieve it.

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Moreover, even the naturally violent animals give up their instincts in an environment where penance and spiritual *sadhana* are performed. This implies that if one wishes to live peacefully amidst the diversity of the world, penance and *sadhana* are a must.

Apart from *Shiva Parivara* many sages also give beautiful examples of the above mentioned unity in diversity. Those sages and hermits used to live and penance in huts made in and surrounded by jungles. With the effect of their penance, it was said that even violent animals abandoned their natural instinct of violence and all of them roamed freely without fear.

### Appearance of *Kala Bhairava*

The words *bhai* (formidable) and *rava* (sound) appropriately depict *Kala Bhairava*, which thus literally means the one who produces sound as formidable and frightening as *kala* (death). *Kala Bhairava* is a *gana* (agent) of Lord Shiva and the guard on his gates. One of the befitting virtues of a guard is that he is a very light sleeper and an ideal example of faithfulness for his lord.

From *Kala Bhairava* people must learn to faithfully discharge their duty for their lord and do the allotted task sincerely, so that no task of the lord is marred.

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# *Vamana Purana*

There is a great similarity between the contents of this *Purana* and that of *Varaha Purana*. All the incarnations of Vishnu from Vamana downwards are described in this *Purana*. The scene of Shiva marrying Parvati is vividly described in this book. This *Purana* contains 10,000 verses and it is considered *uttama* (best) to give this book as a gift in the autumn season or at the time of Visuva to a Brahmin.

It contains the story of Lord Trivikrama.

*Vamana Purana* narrates the tale of the Vaman *avatar* (incarnation) of God as a dialogue between the Sage Pulastya and Narad. The topics of the *Purana* include: tale of *Pralaya*, origin of man, dialogue of Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahadev, fight of Vishnu with Veerbhadra,

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narration about *kaal* by Shiva, immolation of *kama*, battle of Prahlada, boon to Prahlada, battle between the gods and the demons, victory of Andhakasura, description of Pushkaradweep, description of different worlds, tale of Sukeshi, birth of Lolark, birth of Mahishasura, greatness of goddess, killing of Mahishasura, birth of Parvati, description of King Bali's dynasty and his kingdom, defeating of the gods by Bali and their taking refuge at Sage Kashyapa's hermitage, taking of Brahma's refuge by the gods, visiting of Ksheersagar by Sage Kashyapa and the gods, boon to Aditi, criticism of Bali by Prahlada and curse, worship of Vamana, tale of Vamana and Bali and Saraswati *Stotra*.

Besides, there are descriptions of holy places of pilgrimage, description of creation, Shiva *Stuti*, description of the greatness of Sthanu *linga*, tale of Vena, granting of boon to Vena by Lord Shiva, description of the glory of Kurukshetra, dialogue between Lord Shiva (in beggar appearance) and Parvati, requesting of Himalaya by the gods to marry Parvati to Shiva, Shiva-Parvati wedding, birth of Ganesha, killing of Chanda-Munda, killing of Shumbha Nishumbha.

This *Purana* also contains a narration of the birth of Kartikeya, tale of Mahishasura and Tarkasura, piercing of Kraunch, defeat of Andhakasura, tale of Mura, the demon, killing of Mura, sighting of Shiva by the gods in the heart of Lord Vishnu, tale of the King Danda in the dialogue between Prahlada and Andhaka, releasing of Jabali, wedding of Chitrangada, immolation of King Danda, sighting of eternal Shiva, defeat of Andhaka's army, killing of Jambh and Kujambh, defeat of Andhak and granting of boon to him, origin of Marut, killing of Kaalnemi, preaching of Bali by Prahlada, greatness of Bali, defeat of the demon Dhundh, tale of Pururava,

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description of the cosmic man, killing of Jalodbhava, tale of Shridama, pilgrimage of Prahlada, salvation of Gajendra, Saraswati *Stotra*, tale of Vaman's birth, dialogue between Shukracharya and Bali, bounding of Bali, arrival of Vamana, begging by Vamana for three steps of land, assumption of colossal appearance by Vamana, pressing of Bali into *Paataal*.

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# *Varaha Purana*

The mode of narration is in the form of narrating the story by Varaha, the third incarnation of Vishnu. The theme is about holy places and *mantras*. It states that the goddess of earth prayed to Mahavishnu and that prayer took the form of a goddess. This book contains 24,000 verses. If one copies this *Purana* and gives it as gift along with a golden image of Garuda on the full-moon day in the month of *Chaitra* (April) one will attain *Vishnuloka*.

It describes different *vratas* and Lord Vishnu's glories.

*Varaha Purana* narrates the tale of the rescuing of the earth from *Rasatal* by Varaha, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Its contents, in brief, are as follows:

*Mangala Charan:* Praying of Narayana by prithvi (earth), tale of the creation, origin of Rudra, Sanatkumar,

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Marich, etc., tale of Priyavrata, tale of *Dashavatar* (ten incarnations), tale of Dharma-Vyadha, tale of Suprateek and sighting of *Viratroop* (colossal appearance), tale of Gaurmukha, Karma related to Shraddha, tale of Prajagana, origin of agni (fire), tale relating greatness of the days, Gauri, destruction of Daksha Yagya, wedding of HarParvati, Ganesha, Naga, Kartikeya, Aditya, killing of Andhakasura, Matrigana, Katyayani, Kumer, Dharma, Rudra, etc. and their origin, tale of Aruni, tales of the days falling in different months, Agastya Geeta, tale of Shubhvrata, tale of Dhanyavrat, dialogue between Narad and Vishnu, methods for expiation, tale of Agastya, geographical description of Jambu dvipa, Kusha dvipa, Kraunch dvipa, etc., tale of Andhakasura's *vrata*, etc., origin of Vaishnava, killing of Mahishasura, ritual of Kapalik *vrata*, dialogue between Prithvi and Sanatkumar, dialogue between Narayana and Prithvi.

Also there are tale differentiating between sorrow and happiness, tale describing 12 kinds of crime, expiation to destroy the sins, methods of Vishnu worship in the evening, description of Sanatan *dharma*, description of illusion, description of the *karma* for salvation, history of Gridhra and Shringali, dialogue between Chandal and Brahmarakshasas, greatness of Kokamukh, greatness of Badrikashrama, greatness of Mathurakshetra, greatness of Shalgram, tale of Shalankayank, greatness of Stutswamitirth, greatness of Lohargalam, Panchar *kslutra*, Vishran *tirth* and Devavana, worship of Lord Vishnu at the confluence of Yamuna-Saraswati, greatness of Krishna-Ganga, tale of Samb, greatness of Dwadashi *vrat* in Rama *Tirth*, rituals of installing different kinds of idols, description of the origin of *shraddh*, methods of removing impurities,

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Medhatithi Pitrasambad, kinds of Pindsankalpa, ritual of Madhupark, kinds of Madhupark donations.

In addition, we will find a description of the appearance of Yama, description of the court of Yama, description of the fate met by sinners, description of hell, description of the appearance of Yamadoot, description of Chitragupt's effect, directions by Chitragupt for expiation, indications by Chitragupt of the fruits of auspicious-inauspicious *karmas*, description of Pativrat, dialogue between Yama and Narad, greatness of Prabodhini, description of the greatness of Gokarneshwar, granting of boon by Nandikeshwar, description of greatness of Jaleshwar and description of the greatness of Shringeshwar.

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# *Matsya Purana*

This Purana was taught to Manu by Matsya, the incarnation of Vishnu, and it deals with incarnation of Matsya. Several subjects like Jainamata (religion of Jainism), Buddhamata (Buddhism), Natyasastra (histrionics) and Andhraraja *vamsa* (kingdom and kings of Andhra) are discussed in this book. It contains 14,000 verses and this is to be given as a gift along with a golden image of a fish at the time of *Visuva*.

It's the 16th Purana. During the period of *Mahapralaya*, Lord Vishnu had taken Matsya *avatar* (fish incarnation) to save the seeds of all lives and Manu. Matsya Purana contains a comprehensive description of Manu and the Matsya *avatar*.

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The general contents of this *Purana* are description of the greatness of Narsimh incarnation, description of all the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, greatness of fasting like *Anant Tritiya* and the places of pilgrimage like Prayag, tales of Chandra *vansh*, Surya *vansh* and Kuru *vansh* and kings like Yayati and Kartveerya, description of the *kalpa* and *yugas*, appearance of idols, appearance and construction of *Deva-mandapa* (canopy for the deities), tale of Savitri and Satyavan, results of auspicious and inauspicious motion of the planets, birth of Parvati, immolation of Madan (Kamadeva), wedding of Lord Shiva with Parvati, birth of Kartikeya, duties of a king, description of future kings.

This *Purana* is said to be narrated by the Matsya *avatar* of Lord Vishnu to Manu, who was awaiting the Lord's arrival during *Mahapralaya* in his boat anchored at a very high mountain.

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# Kurma Purana

This *Purana* is taught by *Kurmamurti* (incarnation of Vishnu as Kurma (tortoise) while narrating the story of *Indradyumna* at Patala. All the seven islands and seven oceans are described in this book. Bharata is situated in the centre of all these and is called *Jambu dvipa*. Though it is believed that there were four *samhitas* for this, only the *Brahma samhita* is available now. It includes *varagita* and *Vyasagita*.

The book is to be given as gift along with a golden image of the tortoise.

It contains the conversation between Krishna and the Sun God (mentioned in *Bhagavad Gita*); Danvantari; and describes the Lakshmi Kalpa. This *Purana* consists of 18,000 verses.

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Lord Vishnu, in Kurma *avatar* (tortoise incarnation), had first preached this *Purana* to Narad. In his turn, Narad narrated it to Sutji who later narrated this *Purana* to an assembly of the great sages. Initially, this *Purana* had four parts, namely, *Bramhi Samhita, Bhagawati Samhita, Gauri Samhita* and *Vaishnavi Samhita.* Presently, however, none of these *Samhitas* is available except *Brahmi Samhita.* The present version too contains two parts *Purv* and *Uttar* parts.

**Purv Part**

This comprises: tale of Indradyumna, description of *Kurma Purana,* description of Varnashram, description of the sequence of these ashramas, origin of the geosphere, description of various incarnations, preaching of the gods, description of the self-begotten Manu, destruction of Daksh's *yagya,* killing of Hiranyakashipu, Vamana *avatar* (dwarf incarnation), description of Iksvaku clan, description of Pururava clan, description of Rama and Krishna incarnations, description of *Satya, Treta, Dwapar* and *Kali yugas,* greatness of Varanasi, greatness of lingas, greatness of Prayag, Yamuna.

**Uttar Part**

This comprises *yoga* of unexpressed knowledge, appearance of Devadidev (*Rudra*) during Tandava, description of metaphysical knowledge, preaching of metaphysical knowledge by God, description of *Ashtang Yoga,* duties of a celibate, duties of a graduate, description of edible and non-edible things, rituals to be performed regularly, rituals of dining, description of the duties of a *Vanaprasthi,* duties of an ascetic, description of expiation, expiation for drinking of wine and greatness of different places of pilgrimage.

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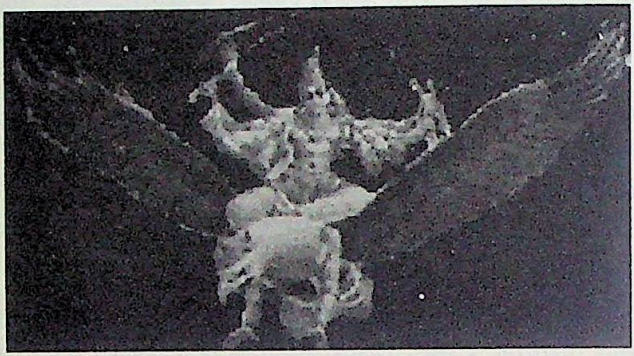
# Garuda Purana



This is in the form of instructions to Garuda by Vishnu. This deals with astronomy, medicine, grammar, as well as the structure and qualities of diamonds. This *Purana* is dear to Vaishnavites. The latter half of this *Purana* deals with life after death. The Hindus of north India generally read this *Purana* while cremating the bodies of the dead. This has given great importance to the origin of Garuda. There are 18,000 verses in this book. This book should be given as a gift along with an image in gold of a swan to get prosperity.

It contains the subject of *Bhagavad Gita;* reincarnation; Vishnu *sahasranama;* and description of *Tarsya Kalpa.*

Garuda was the son of Vinita, the daughter of Dakshaprajapati. His father was Sage Kashyapa. Free from the worldly bondages and having all the knowledge, he was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was a vehicle for Lord Vishnu, he is also described in scriptures as his friend, server, flag, seat, bed and even the food. The *Vedas* describe him as *'Sarva eda Mya Vigraha'* (a detached person having knowledge of all the *Vedas*).

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At one place in *Shrimad Bhagwad*, it is mentioned that Brihadatta and Rathamtar, the two divisions of *Sam Veda*, are in fact his two wings. Thus when Garuda flew, his flapping wings produced the sound of rhythmic recitation of *Saman Veda*.

Living in the proximity of god, Garuda always remained engaged in his service. Since he is also said to be the seat of god, a depression had occurred on his back as a result of constantly being pressed by god's feet. He had the fortune of being the vehicle for God. At times of war with the demons, god honoured him as the commander of the forces and left everything to him, for he is the dearest and most faithful server. Despite being a continuous server of god, Garuda was born to Vinita, the wife of Sage Kashyap. He was very faithful to his mother also. Being the son of Vinita, he also came to be known as Vainartaya. In the *Gita*, the Lord has described him as one of his ornaments. Being a continuous server of the God, he was of great help to the devotees. Among the 18 *Puranas*, one is named *Garuda Purana* after him. By the inspiration and grace of the Lord, Garuda himself had recited this *Purana* before his father, Sage Kashyap. Later on Vyasaji collected this *Purana* and popularised it in the world.

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# Sakanda Purana

This *Purana* is narrated by Skanda. The theme is the slaughter of the demon Tarakasura by Skanda (Subrahmanya). There is a great similarity between this *Purana* and the *Kumarasambhava* of Kalidasa. There are 81,000 verses in this *Purana* and giving this book as a gift is thought to be good.

The largest of all the *Puranas*, it contains 81,000 *shlokas* (stanzas). It has seven parts—*Maheshwar, Vaishnava, Brahma, Kashi, Avanti, Nagar* and *Prabhasa*. This *Purana* got its name from Skand (Kartikeya), the son of Lord Shiva. It has descriptions of the birth of Skand; its reason and effects constitute the main theme. Kartikeya was the commander of the god's army and had killed the demon Tarakasura.

*Maheshwar Khand* contains a description of Lord Shiva's glory, installation of Shiva *linga* in Kashi and

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Avanti (Ujjain), description of the life and plays of Lord Vishnu.

*Vaishnava Khand* contains tales related to Lord Vishnu's life and plays, his virtues, description of holy places of pilgrimage, e.g. Purushottam Tirth (Jagannath Puri), Badrikashrama, Heratkeshwar, Avantika Prabhasa, Dwarika, etc., benefits of fasting, glorious effects of ritual bathing in *Kartik, Margasheersh* and *Vaishaka* months, description of subjects like knowledge, asceticism, devotion, moral conduct, cleanliness, *Varnashrama* (four phases of life), *Pativrat* (abidance to the spouse), *Yagya*, donation, expiation, and *Shraddh* (offering to dead ancestors).

Remaining *khands* likewise deal with the glorious exploits of Lord Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma.

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# *Markandeya Purana*

This is one of the ancient *Puranas*. It has many stories regarding Indra, Surya and Agni. This includes a division called *Devimahatmya* containing praises about the goddess Durga. It has 9,000 verses and it is considered *uttama* (best) to give this book as a gift to a Brahmin on a full-moon day in the month of *Karttika* (November).

This book also contains stories of Rama and Krishna.

The *Markandeya Purana* begins with a question put forth by Sage Jaimini. In reply to this question, Sage Markandeya narrates what constitutes the subject matter of this *Purana*.

In the great epic *Mahabharat*, which was created by Vedavyasa, description of dharma, *arth*, *kama* and *moksha* appears to be intertwined at times and at other times, they appear to be separate from one another.

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Vedavyasa had described the norms, the stages and the means to perform the duties in all the four stages. This epic contains cryptic knowledge of the *Vedas*.

Once Jaimini, a disciple of Sage Vedavyasa, expressed his curiosity before Markandeya, saying, 'O great sage! I have approached you in order to grasp the full knowledge contained in *Mahabharat* with your help. Why did Lord take human incarnation even though he is the cause of the origin, perpetuation and destruction of the universe? How did Draupadi become the wife of five Pandavas? How did Balaram expiate for the sin of killing a Brahmin? How did Draupadi's sons give up their lives? Kindly narrate all these things in detail.'

Markandeya says—'O Muni! Presently I am engaged in evening worship. Hence I do not have time to narrate these things in detail. But I am telling you about the birds which will narrate to you the entire content of the *Mahabharat*. Those birds will also remove all your doubts. Sons of the great bird Drona—Pingaksha, Vibodha, Suputra, Sumuk, etc. stay in the caves among the hills of Vindhyachal. They are proficient in the *Vedas*. Go and ask them, they will remove all your doubts.'

Markandeya's words surprised Jaimini. To confirm, he asked again—'It is surprising that the birds can narrate the content of the *Mahabharat* just like human beings. It is even more surprising that they are proficient in a knowledge of the *Vedas*, which is rare even among humans. Kindly tell me, how did they come to acquire such profound knowledge despite having being born in the form of birds? Why do you call them the sons of Drona?'

Markandeya says—'Long ago, a strange event took place in Nandanvan involving Indra, Devrishi Narad and some of the elves. One day, Indra was enjoying his

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time in the Nandanvan forest along with his elves. At the same time Narad also arrived there. Indra welcomed and offered him a seat. The elves also greeted Narad. Indra then said—"Munivar! Tell me, what do you desire now? If you desire to listen to a song, should I order the Gandharvas or if you wish to watch the dance, should I order one of my elves, Menka, Rambha, Mishrakeshi or Urvashi? Any of these four can perform a seducing dance before you."

Narad expressed his desire to watch the dance of an elf, who was superior in beauty to the other elves. This led to a row among the elves. Each one of them was proud of her beauty and talent. Narad then advised them to test their beauty by breaking Sage Durvaasa's penance who was at that time staying on a hill top. All the elves expressed their inability to perform this task successfully. Only an elf named Vapu, driven by her haughtiness, accepted to break the penance of Sage Durvaasa.

Accordingly, she reached the hill where Durvaasa was staying and began to sing an infatuating song in her sweet voice. Very soon, the song began to show its effect on Durvaasa. Attracted by the sweet voice, Durvaasa went in search of the origin of the voice and found Vapu singing at a distance. Durvaasa understood that the elf had come to break his penance. Angrily, he cursed the elf that she would take birth in the lineage of birds for 16 years, she would not bear a child and ultimately would be killed by a weapon to regain her heavenly abode. After saying this, Sage Durvaasa migrated to Akashganga.

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# *Agni Purana*

This *Purana* was taught by *Agnideva* to the sage Vasishtha. There are several references in this to Shiva *linga* and Durgadevi. The incarnations of Rama and Krishna are also dealt with in this. Distinct from other *Puranas* this book deals with arts and science like *Kavyalankaranatakas* (poems, dramas, figures of speech), *Jyotish shastra* (astronomy) and *Shilpakala* (architecture). This *Purana* is capable of imparting knowledge on all arts and sciences and it consists of 16,000 verses.

The *Agni Purana*, disclosed to Vasishtha by Agni, deals with different subjects such as cosmology, genealogy, geography, astronomy, astrology, rituals from marriages to funerals, omens and portents, art and architecture, poetics and grammar. It describes all the incarnations of Vishnu except those of Rama and Krishna in detail.

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In the forest that is known as Naimisharanya, Shounaka and the other *rishis* (sages) were performing a *yajna* (sacrifice) dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Suta had also come there on his way to a pilgrimage.

The sages told Suta, 'We have welcomed you. Now describe to us that which makes men all-knowing. Describe to us that which is the most sacred in the whole world.'

Suta replied, 'Vishnu is the essence of everything. I went to a hermitage named Vadrika with Shuka, Paila and other sages and met Vyasadeva there. Vyasadeva described to me that which he had learnt from the great sage Vasishtha, Vasishtha having learnt it from the god Agni himself. The *Agni Purana* is sacred because it tells us about the essence of the *Brahman* (the divine essence). I learnt all this from Vyasadeva and I will now tell you all that I have learnt.'

*Avataras (Avatars)*

Do you know what an *avatara* is? An *avatara* is an incarnation and means that a god adopts a human form to be born on earth. Why do gods do this? The purpose is to destroy evil on earth and establish righteousness. Vishnu is regarded as the preserver of the universe and it is therefore Vishnu's incarnations that one encounters most often. Vishnu has already had nine such incarnations and the tenth and final incarnation is due in the future. These ten incarnations of Vishnu are as follows:

1. Matsya *avatara* or fish incarnation
2. Kurma *avatara* or turtle incarnation
3. Varaha *avatara* or boar incarnation

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4. Narasimha *avatara*—an incarnation in the form of a being who was half-man and half-lion.
5. Vamana *avatara* or dwarf incarnation
6. Parashurama
7. Rama
8. Krishna
9. Buddha
10. Kalki—this is the incarnation that is yet to come.

The *Agni Purana* now describes these ten incarnations.

**Matsya**

Agni told Vasishtha the story of the fish incarnation.

Many years ago, the whole world was destroyed. The destruction in fact extended to all the three *lokas* (worlds) of *bhuloka, bhuvarloka* and *svarloka. Bhuloka* is the earth, *svarloka* or *svarga* is heaven and *bhuvarloka* is a region between the earth and heaven. All these worlds were flooded with water.

Vaivasvata Manu was the son of the Sun-God. He had spent 10,000 years in prayers and *tapasya* (meditation) in the hermitage *vadrika*. This hermitage was on the banks of the river Kritamala.

Once Manu came to the river to perform his ablutions. He immersed his hands in the water and when he raised them, he found that there was a small fish swimming in the water in the cup of his hands.

Manu was about to throw the fish back into the water when the fish said, 'Don't throw me back. I am scared of alligators and crocodiles and big fishes. Save me.'

Manu found an earthen pot in which he kept the fish. But soon the fish became too big for the pot and

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Manu had to find a larger vessel in which the fish might be kept. But the fish became too big for this vessel as well and Manu had to transfer the fish to a lake. But the fish grew and grew and became too large for the lake. So Manu transferred the fish to the ocean. In the ocean, the fish grew until it became gigantic.

By now, Manu's wonder knew no bounds. He said, 'Who are you? You must be Lord Vishnu, I bow before you. Tell me, why are you tantalising me in the form of a fish?'

The fish replied, 'I have to punish the evil and protect the good. Seven days from now, the ocean will flood the entire world and all beings will be destroyed. But since you have saved me, I will save you. When the world is flooded, a boat will arrive here. Take the *saptarshis* (seven sages) in that boat. Don't forget to take the seeds of foodgrains with you. I will arrive and you will then fasten the boat to my horn with a huge snake.'

Saying this, the fish disappeared.

Everything happened as the fish had promised it would. The ocean became turbulent and Manu climbed into the boat. He tied the boat to the huge horn that the fish had. He prayed to the fish and the fish related the *Matsya Purana* to him. Eventually, when the water receded, the boat was anchored to the topmost peak of the Himalayas. And living beings were created once again.

A *danava* (demon) named Hayagriva had stolen the sacred texts of the *Vedas* and the knowledge of the *Brahman*. In his form of a fish, Vishnu also killed Hayagriva and recovered the *Vedas*.

**Kurma**

Many years ago there was a war between the *devas* (gods) and the *daityas* (demons) and the gods lost this

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war. They prayed to Vishnu to rescue them from the oppression of the demons. Vishnu told Brahma and the other gods that they should have a temporary truce with the demons. The two sides should get together to churn the ocean. Vishnu would ensure that the *devas* benefited more from this churning of the ocean than the *daityas* did.

The truce was agreed upon and the two sides got ready to churn the ocean. The mountain Mandara was used as a churning rod and great snake Vasuki as the rope for churning. The *devas* grasped Vasuki's tail and the *daityas* grasped Vasuki's head. But as the churning began, the mountain Mandara which had no base, started to get immersed in the ocean. What was to be done? Lord Vishnu came to the rescue. He adopted the form of a turtle and the peak was balanced on the turtle's back.

As the churning continued, a terrible poison named *kalkuta* emerged from the depths of the ocean and was swallowed by Shiva. Shiva's throat became blue from this poison and he is therefore known as Nilakantha, blue of throat. The goddess Varuni, the goddess of wine (*sura*), came out next. The gods readily accepted her and thus they came to be known as *suras*. But the demons rejected Varuni and were therefore known as *asuras*. She was followed by the Parijata tree, a beautiful tree that came to occupy place of pride in Indra's garden. A jewel named *koustubha* emerged and was accepted by Vishnu as his adornment. Three wonderful animals came out next—the cow Kapila, the horse Ucchaishrava and the elephant Airavata. They were followed by the *apsaras*, beautiful women who became the dancers of heaven. They were known as *apsaras* because they

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emerged from *ap* (water). The goddess Lakshmi or Shri came out next and was united with Vishnu.

Finally, Dhanvantari emerged with a pot of *amrita* (the life-giving drink) in his hands. Dhanvantari was the originator of medicine (*ayurveda*). The *daityas* led by Jambha gave half of the *amrita* to the *devas* and departed with the remaining half.

But Vishnu quickly adopted the form of a beautiful woman. So beautiful was the woman that the demons were charmed. 'Pretty lady,' they said, 'take the *amrita* and serve it to us.' 'Marry us.' Vishnu accepted the *amrita*, but he had no intention of giving it to the demons. He served it to the gods instead. There was only one demon who was somewhat clever. His name was Rahu. He adopted the form of Chandra, the Moon-God, and succeeded in drinking some of the *amrita*. The Sun-God and the Moon-God noticed what was happening and reported it to Vishnu. Vishnu thereupon cut off Rahu's head with a sword.

But Rahu had drunk the *amrita*, so he could not die. He prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu granted him a boon. The boon was that occasionally Rahu would be permitted to swallow up the sun. You can see this happening at the time of the solar and the lunar eclipses. People who give alms during such eclipses are blessed.

Thus the gods obtained the *amrita* and the demons did not, and the gods became more powerful than the demons. They defeated the demons and regained heaven.

**Varaha**

Vishnu's next incarnation was in the form of a boar.

The sage Kashyapa and his wife Diti had a son named Hiranyaksha who became the king of the *asuras*.

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Hiranyaksha's meditation pleased Brahma and Brahma granted him the boon that he would be invincible in battle. Thus armed, Hiranyaksha went out to fight with the *devas*. He completely defeated the gods and conquered heaven. He also defeated Varuna, the god of the ocean. Thus, Hiranyaksha became the king of the heaven, the earth and the underworld.

But the *asura* was not particularly fond of earth. He himself had begun to live in Varuna's palace under the ocean. So he hurled the earth into the depths of the ocean.

The gods went to Vishnu and prayed that something might be done about Hiranyaksha. They wished to be restored to heaven and they wished that the earth might be brought back from the depths of the ocean. In response to these prayers, Vishnu adopted the form of a boar and entered the ocean. Who should he meet there but Hiranyaksha himself?

Hiranyaksha of course did not know that this boar was none other than Vishnu. He thought that it was an ordinary boar and attacked it. The two fought for many years. But finally, Hiranyaksha was gored to death by the boar's tusks. The boar raised the earth up once again with its tusks.

Vishnu thus saved the gods and the principles of righteousness or *dharma*.

**Narasimha**

Hiranyaksha had a brother named Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu was furious to learn that his brother had been killed and he resolved to kill Vishnu. But this could not be done unless he himself became powerful and invincible. Hiranyakashipu, therefore, began to pray

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to Brahma through difficult meditation. Brahma was pleased with his prayers and offered to grant a boon.

'I want to be invincible,' said Hiranyakashipu. 'Please grant me the boon that I may not be killed by night or day; that I may not be killed by man or beast; and that I may not be killed in the sky, the water or the earth.'

Brahma granted the desired boon. And Hiranyakashipu was happy. He thought that he had taken care of all possible eventualities. And since he had become so powerful, he conquered all the three worlds and kicked the gods out of heaven.

Hiranyakashipu had a son named Prahlada. You no doubt remember that Hiranyakashipu had resolved to kill Vishnu. But strangely enough, Prahlada became devoted to Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu tried to dissuade his son, but it did not work. He tried to kill his son. That too did not work since each time Vishnu intervened to save Prahlada.

Meanwhile, the gods had been driven out from heaven. They had also been deprived of their shares in *yajnas* by Hiranyakashipu. These shares now went only to the *asura* king. In desperation, they went and prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu promised them that he would find a solution.

One day, Hiranyakashipu called Prahlada to him. 'How is it that you escaped each time I tried to kill you?' he asked.

'Because Vishnu saved me,' replied Prahlada. 'Vishnu is everywhere.'

'What do you mean, everywhere?' retorted Hiranyakashipu. He pointed to a crystal pillar inside the palace and asked, 'Is Vishnu inside this pillar as well?'

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'Yes,' replied Prahlada.

'Very well then. I am going to kick the pillar,' said Hiranyakashipu.

When Hiranyakashipu kicked the pillar, it broke into two. And from inside the pillar, Vishnu emerged in his form of half-man and half-lion. He caught hold of Hiranyakashipu and placed the demon across his thighs. And with his claws, he tore apart the demon's chest and so killed him. Brahma's boon had been that Hiranyakashipu would not be killed by man or beast. But then Narasimha was neither man nor beast, it was half-man and half-beast. The boon had said that the *asura* would not be killed in the sky, the water or the earth. But Hiranyakashipu was killed on Vishnu's thighs, which were not the sky, the water or the earth. And finally, the boon had promised that Hiranyakashipu would not be killed by night or day. Since the incident took place in the evening, it was not night or day.

After Hiranyakashipu died, the gods were restored to their rightful places. Vishnu made Prahlada the king of the *asuras*.

**Vamana**

Prahlada's grandson was Vali and Vali became very powerful. When he was the king of the *asuras*, there was a war between the *devas* and the *asuras*. The gods were defeated and were driven off from *svarga*. As always, the gods fled to Vishnu and began to pray to him to save them. Vishnu assured the gods that he would do something about Vali.

Accordingly, Vishnu was born as the son of Aditi and Kashyapa. The son was a dwarf.

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King Vali had arranged for a huge sacrifice and had announced that, on the occasion of the sacrifice, he would not refuse anyone a boon. The dwarf arrived at this sacrifice and began to recite the *Vedas*. Vali was so pleased at this that he offered the dwarf a boon. Vali's *guru* (teacher) Shukracharya thought that there was something fishy about the way the dwarf had arrived. So he tried to restrain Vali.

'No,' said Vali. 'I have offered a boon and I shall stick to my word. What boon do you desire? I will give whatever you want.'

Before a boon was actually granted, a small rite had to be performed with holy water. Shukracharya was still trying to do his best to prevent the boon from being given. So he entered the vessel in which the holy water was kept to seal the mouth of the vessel and prevent the water from being taken out. To get at the holy water, the vessel was pierced with a straw. This straw also pierced one of Shukracharya's eyes. Ever since that day, the preceptor of the demons has been one-eyed.

'Give me as much of land as may be covered in three of my steps,' said the dwarf. 'I need this as *dakshina* (fee) for my *guru*.'

Vali agreed. But the dwarf adopted a gigantic form. With one step he covered *bhuloka*. With another step he covered *bhuvarloka*. And with the last step he covered *svarloka*. The three worlds were thus lost to Vali and Vishnu returned them to Indra. Vali had no option but to go down to the underworld (*patala*). But so pleased was Vishnu at Vali's generosity that he granted the *asura* the boon that he would bear the title of Indra in the future.

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**Parashurama**

The Kshatriyas were the second of the four classes. It was their job to wear arms and protect the world and rule. The Brahmanas were the first of the four classes. It was their job to pray, study the sacred texts and perform religious rites. But the Kshatriyas became very insolent and began to oppress the world and Brahmanas. Vishnu was then born as the son of sage Jamadagni and his wife Renuka. Since this was the line of sage Bhrigu, Parashurama was also called Bhargava. Parashurama's mission was to protect the Brahmanas and teach a lesson to the Kshatriyas.

There was a king named Kartavirya who had received all sorts of boons from the Sage Dattatreya. Thanks to these boons, Kartavirya had 1,000 arms and conquered and ruled over the entire world.

One day, Kartavirya went on a hunt to the forest. He was very tired after the hunt and was invited by sage Jamadagni who had a *kamadhenu* cow. This meant that the cow produced whatever its owner desired. Jamadagni used the *kamadhenu* to treat Kartavirya and all his soldiers to a sumptuous feast.

Kartavirya was so enamoured of the *kamadhenu* that he asked the sage to give it to him. But Jamadagni refused. Kartavirya then abducted the cow by force and a war started between Kartavirya and Parashurama. In this war, Parashurama cut off Kartavirya's head with his axe (*parashu*) and brought the *kamadhenu* back to the hermitage.

After some time, when Parashurama was away, Kartavirya's sons arrived at the *ashrama* and killed Jamadagni. On the death of his father, Parashurama's anger was aroused. He killed all the Kshatriyas in the world 21 times. On the plains of Kurukshetra, he built

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five wells which were filled with the blood of the Kshatriyas. Eventually, Parashurama handed over the world to Kashyapa and went to live on Mount Mahendra.

**Rama**

Brahma came out of Vishnu's navel. Brahma's son was Marichi's son Kashyapa, Kashyapa's son was Surya, Surya's son Vaivasvata Manu, Manu's son Iksvaku, Iksvaku's son Kakutstha, Kakutstha's son Raghu, Raghu's son Aja, Aja's son Dasharatha, and Dasharatha's sons were Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Since Rama descended from Kakutstha and Raghu, he was also called Kakutstha and Raghava. Since his father's name was Dasharatha, he was also called Dasharathi. Rama's story belongs to the solar line (*surya vansha*), since one of his ancestors was Surya.

Vishnu himself wished to destroy Ravana and the other *rakshasas* (demons). He therefore divided himself into four parts and was born as Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Rama was Koushalya's son, Bharata Kaikeyi's, while Lakshmana and Shatrughna were the sons of Sumitra.

The sage Vishvamitra came to Dasharatha and pleaded for Rama's help in defeating the *rakshasas* who were disturbing his *yajnas*. Rama killed these demons and Vishvamitra was so pleased that he taught Rama the use of all divine weapons. Rama broke a bow of Shiva's that had been in the possession of the king of Mithila, Janaka. This was the task that had been appointed for marrying Sita, Janaka's daughter. Rama married Sita, Lakshmana married Urmila, Bharata married Mandavi and Shatrughna married Shrutakirti.

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On the way back to Ayodhya, Rama also beat Parashurama in a duel.

Dasharatha resolved that Rama should be made *yuvaraja*, that is, the heir apparent to the kingdom.

But Kaikeyi had a servant named Manthara who plotted otherwise. When he was young, Rama had pulled at Manthara's feet and ever since that day, Manthara had not been kindly towards Rama. She reminded Kaikeyi of the two boons that had been promised to her by King Dasharatha. Years ago, the gods had been fighting with the demon Shambara and had asked Dasharatha for his help. In fighting with Shambara, Dasharatha had been injured. He had been nursed back to health by Kaikeyi. Dasharatha had promised two boons to Kaikeyi as a reward and Manthara's suggestion was that Kaikeyi should now ask for those two boons. By the first boon Rama would be banished to the forest for 14 years and by the second boon Bharata would become *yuvaraja*.

Kaikeyi listened to Manthara. At Manthara's instance, she asked for these two boons. Dasharatha was very angry, but Rama insisted that he would indeed go to the forest for 14 years. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita first went to the banks of the river Tamasa. From there they went to the kingdom of Guha, the king of the hunters (*nishadas*). They crossed the river Jahnavi and arrived in Prayaga, where Sage Bharadvaja had his hermitage. Their final destination was the mountain range of Chitrakuta, on the banks of the river Mandakini.

Meanwhile, back home in Ayodhaya, king Dasharatha, who could not bear to be parted from Rama, died. Bharata and Shatrughna had gone on a visit to their uncle's house and were recalled. But

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Bharata refused to be king. He went to the forest to try and persuade Rama to return, but Rama insisted that he would not return before the 14 years were over. So Bharata brought back Rama's sandals. He placed these sandals on the throne as a token of Rama's kingship. And he began to rule the kingdom in Rama's name from Nandigrama, rather than from Ayodhya.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita then went to the forest that is known as the Dandaka forest, *dandakaranya*. This forest was on the banks of the river Godavari and there was a beautiful grove inside the forest known as Panchavati. They built a hut there and resolved to live there.

There was a *rakshasa* woman named Shurpanakha. She happened to come to the place where Rama, Lakshmana and Sita had built their hut. Shurpanakha liked Rama so much that she wanted to marry him and eat up Lakshmana and Sita. But Lakshmana cut off Shurpanakha's nose and ears with his sword.

Shurpanakha fled to brother Khara and demanded revenge. Khara and 14,000 other demons (*rakshasas*) attacked Rama, but they were all killed by Rama. Shurpanakha then went to her other brother Ravana, the king of Lanka.

Ravana asked the *rakshasa* Maricha to adopt the form of a golden deer and roam around in front of Rama's hut. Sita was so charmed by the deer that she asked Rama to capture it for her. Rama was long in returning and Lakshmana went to look for him. Taking advantage of Rama and Lakshmana's absence, Ravana kidnapped Sita. Jatayu, the king of the birds, did try to stop Ravana, but he met his death at Ravana's hands.

Rama and Lakshmana were greatly distressed to find Sita missing and they looked for her everywhere.

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Rama made friends with the monkey Sugriva. He killed Sugriva's brother Bali and made Sugriva the king of monkeys. The monkeys were sent off in all four directions to look for Sita.

The monkeys who had gone towards the south learnt that Sita was in Lanka, across the ocean. One of these monkeys was Hanumana. Hanumana leapt over the ocean and arrived in Lanka. He discovered the lonesome Sita in a grove of *ashoka* trees, the *ashokavana*. Hanumana introduced himself and assured Sita that he would soon be back with Rama. Hanumana caused some general havoc in Lanka and was captured by Meghnada also called Indrajit, Ravana's son. Ravana ordered that Hanumana's tail should be set on fire. But Hanumana used his burning tail to set fire to all the houses of Lanka. He then returned to Rama with the news that Sita had been found.

Rama, Lakshmana and the army of monkeys arrived at the shores of the ocean. There they built a bridge over the ocean so that they could cross over into Lanka. There was a terrible war in which Rama killed the giant Kumbhakarna, Ravana's brother. Lakshmana killed Indrajit. Rama killed Ravana with a powerful divine weapon, the *Brahmastra*.

The 14 years were now over and Rama, Lakshmana and Sita returned to Ayodhya. There Rama was crowned king and he treated his subjects as his own sons. He punished the wicked and followed the path of *dharma*. During Rama's rule there was no shortage of foodgrain anywhere and the people were righteous. No one died an untimely death.

On Rama's instructions, Shatrughna killed the *asura* Lavana and built the city of Mathura in the place where

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Lavana's kingdom had been. Bharata was sent by Rama to kill a wicked *gandharva*, a singer of heaven named Shailusha, who lived on the banks of the river Indus with his sons. Bharata killed them and built two cities there, Takshashila and Pushkaravati. In Takshashila Bharata established his son Ataksha as king and in Pushkaravati he made his son Pushkara the king. Rama and Sita had two sons named Kusha and Lava. Rama ruled for 11,000 years before he died.

This is the story of the *Ramayana* as recounted in the *Agni Purana*. It was written by Sage Valmiki after he had heard the story from Sage Narada.

Rama was the 7th *avatara* of Vishnu, Krishna was the 8th, whose glorious deeds find full description in the *Agni Purana*.

The ninth *avatara* of Vishnu was Buddha and the tenth will be Kalki.

Many years ago, there was a war between the *devas* and the *asuras* in which the demons managed to defeat the gods. The gods went running to Vishnu for protection and Vishnu told them that Mayamoha would be born as Buddha, the son of Shuddhodana. Such were the illusions that Buddha created, that the *asuras* left the path indicated by the *Vedas* and became Buddhist. These dastardly creatures performed ceremonies that were as sure ticket to *naraka*. Towards the end of the Kali era, all people will be dastardly. They will oppose the Vedas, become robbers and will be concerned only with wealth. The disbelievers will then become kings and these kings will also be cannibals.

Much later, Kalki will be born on earth as the son of Vishnuyasha. He will take up arms to destroy these disbelievers. Kalki 's priest will be the Sage Yajnavalkya. The norms of the four classes (*varna*) and the stages of

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life (*ashrama*) will be established yet again. People will honour the sacred texts and become righteous. It will then be time for the dawn of a new *satya yuga*, a fresh period of righteousness.

In every cycle (kalpa) and in every eras (manvantara) Vishnu is thus born in various forms. It is a sacred duty to listen to the stories of the ten *avataras*. The listener attains his desires and goes to heaven.

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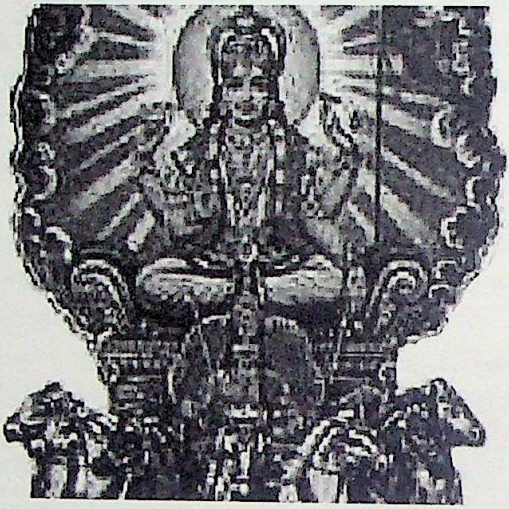
# *Bhavishya Purana*



This is what is told to Manu by *Surya* (Sun). This contains statements about future events. The book praises the worship of *Surya* (sun), *Agni* (fire) and *Naga* (serpent). There is an annexure dealing with several holy places of Bharata and the rights of pilgrims. The book contains 14,500 verses and it is considered to be *uttama* (best) to give this book along with treacle as a gift to a Brahmin on full-moon day in the month of *Pausha* (January).

It contains the glories of devotional service and prediction of Lord Chaitanya.

Divided into five parts, the first part contains a description of the genesis, greatness of the dates and worship of Lord Vishnu, Shiva and *Surya*. The second, third and fourth parts describe the greatness of Shiva, Vishnu and *Surya* respectively. The fifth part contains a description of heaven. Like other *Puranas*, *Bhavishya*

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*Purana* also contains a description of the ancient kings and Chandra and Surya dynasties. Interestingly, *Bhavishya Purana* contains a description of a game that resembles modern chess to a great extent. In all, the subject matter of *Bhavishya Purana* seems to be an attempt to prove and establish the supremacy of Brahma.

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# *Brahma Vaivata Purana*

This was taught by Narada to Savarnika. The theme is the story of Rathantara. There are four *khandas* in this *Purana* called *Brahma khand, Prakriti khand, Ganesha khand and Krsna Janma khand.* This deals with *Prapancasrsti* (creation of the universe). It says that *Prapanca* is nothing but *Vaivarta* (transformation) of *Brahman.* It is considered to be holy to give this book containing 18,000 verses as a gift on the full-moon day in the month of *Magha* (February).

It contains the glories and pastimes of Radha and Krishna and is the 12th *Purana.*

In *Naimisharanya* Tirth, addressing a gathering of great sages like Shaunak etc., Sutaji has described this *Purana* as a marvellous creation. This *Purana* describes the plays of Lord Krishna and Radha in considerable detail. Thus, it is a basic source of inspiration for all the

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subsequent treatises that depict the life of Radha. It is the only *Purana* that exclusively describes the episodes from the life of Radha, the most beloved lady of Lord Shri Krishna.

*Brahma khand:* This describes the creation of the universe, origin of Narayana from the body of Shri Krishna, origin of Radha in Rasamandal, origin of gopas, gopis and cows from the bodies of Radha and Krishna, and creation of the other animate-inanimate world.

*Prakriti khand:* This describes the greatness of Durga, Radha, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Savitri in the creation of the world, and contains tales of Savitri-Satyavaan, Surabhi, Swaha and Swadha, description of the clan of Surath, tale of Ganga, tales from *Ramayana*, curse of Durvasa on Indra, and worship of Lakshmi.

*Ganesh khand:* This mainly discusses the greatness of Lord Ganesh. It also contains tales of Jamadagni, Karteveerya, Parashurama, etc.

*Shri Krishna khand:* This describes the life and plays of Lord Shri Krishna, under the heads of Braj *leela*, *Mathura leela*, reunion of Radha and Krishna and migration of the residents of Gokul to Gokula.

In the opinion of this *Purana*, there are ten features of *Maha Purana*. These are: creation, preservation, *Pralaya* (destruction), fostering, *karma*, description of lust, description of each of the 14 Manus and their dynasties, description of salvation, recitation of the virtues of Shri Hari and description of the glory of the gods. But the *Puranas* with five features and *Upa Puranas* have the following common features: creation, destruction, description of Chandra and Surya dynasties and their kings and description of the fourteen Manus.

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# *Srimad Bhagwad Purana*

This is the most popular and widely circulated of all the *Puranas*. It is dear to Vishnu devotees. It is divided into 12 *Skandhas* and contains 18,000 *shlokas*. All the incarnations of Vishnu are described in this. The most interesting *Skandha* is the tenth *Skandha* in which the author describes the life and activities of Shri Krishna. There was once a belief that it was Baladeva who lived in the 13th century AD who composed this *Purana*. But this belief was discredited when it was found that Valialasena of Bengal who lived in the 11th century AD had made references to this *Purana* in some of his works. Bhagavata accepts Kapila and Buddha as incarnations of Vishnu. This has been translated into all Indian languages. This book has to be given as gift on the full-moon day in the month of *Prosthapada* (September). *Agni Purana* instructs that this book is to be given along with a golden image of a lion.

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*Srimad Bhagwad* is regarded as a delicious fruit of *VedaKalpa*, the period of four *yugas* during which the *Vedas* are supposed to have been written. There is nothing abdicable in *Srimad Bhagwad*. The *Bhagwadkar* (the orator of *Srimad Bhagwad*) invites all the devotees in the world to relish this great scripture. *Srimad Bhagwad* is a contemporary of the *Vedas*; there is a profuse mention of *karm* (action), *upasana* (worship) and *gyan* (knowledge) in the *Vedas*, but *bhakti* (devotion) could not find a place in them.

*Srimad Bhagwad* compensates for this drawback, for it has a vivid and comprehensive description of *bhakti* (devotion). No action, worship and knowledge can exist without devotion. The presentation style of *Srimad Bhagwad* is also remarkable; every page flows in the stream of devotion. All the forms and appearances of god have been described exhaustively. It is such a benevolent scripture that the mere hearing of it even without getting its meaning, is beneficial for the listener. If, however, one reflects on the meaning of the content, it would be a bonus. There are many examples in the past when even the most dreaded sinister person has received salvation by a mere hearing of *Srimad Bhagwad*. Sinister Dhundhukari, who was in ghost form, is one such example. King Parikshit too, had a sight of his own soul by listening to *Srimad Bhagwad*. Such examples are getting scarce nowadays. Even then the devotees who really relish *Bhagwad* get free from the fears of death.

*Srimad Bhagwad* makes a man fearless. Dhruv rode death itself for his heavenly departure. Pitamah Bheeshma turned away inevitable death many times. Hence, those devotees who have taken shelter in *Srimad Bhagwad* develop faith in themselves. Then they have no fear of death. *Srimad Bhagwad* is an immortal

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scripture that generates devotion. It is a means of finding god without *yoga* and *tapa*.

Virtues like unconditional love, generosity, grace, kindness and protection of the refugee that are the adornments of god, have been described in a simple, easy to grasp way in *Srimad Bhagwad*. Virtues of god like his playing and chatting with ordinary people and helping them in every circumstance sympathetically, naturally attract the people towards him. *Bhagwad* makes a man free from doubts. It is a supreme creation by Vyasaji. *Bhagwad* is in fact an appearance of Narayana. It is a complete scripture. Believers get guidance by listening to it, while the infidels become believers. Even a sage like Shukdevji, who deserted everything, couldn't give up the temptation to hear *Srimad Bhagwad*. It is a life giver to all kinds of people. It has a beautiful balance between practice and altruism. It has comprehensive information regarding knowledge, action, social duties, women's duties, religion, politics, etc. Having heard and reflected over *Srimad Bhagwad*, there remains nothing more to know. In the present era the society has neglected knowledge, devotion and spirituality. It regards physical achievements as everything. *Bhagwad* does not forbid or deny physical achievements, but it gives a message to acquire a balanced view of them—neither too much indifference nor too much indulgence.

*Tathanate Madhav Tavakah Kvachit Bhrashyanti Margat Vadi Baddh Sahridai.*

*Tvaya Bhigupta Vicharanti Nirbhaya Vinayakanikapamurdha Suprabho.*

*Tavad Raga Dayan Stemastavad Karagriham Griham Tavanmohondhri Nigado Yavat Krishna Na Te Janam.*

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Created by Maharshi Badrayan an epithet of Ved Vyas, *Srimad Bhagwad Mahapuran* is an immortal heritage of the world's ancient literature. It is no less than ambrosia. *Srimad Bhagwad* is equally honoured by learned persons, devotees, sages and metaphysical researchers.

Tales from the time of the beginning of creation to the *pralaya kaal* (the great deluge) have been skilfully interwoven in *Srimad Bhagwad*. Because of its unique dialogue-like presentation style, *Srimad Bhagwad* is an encyclopaedia in itself.

*Vadanti Tattattvavavidah Tattvam Yaogyanam Dvayam,*
*Brahneti Para Matmeti Bhagava Niti Shabdyate.*

The *Bhagwad* literally means god or akin to god. All the virtues of god, therefore, and even those of his devotees are expressed by this seemingly simple word, *Bhagwad* which has been transformed into an immortal scripture by Krishna.

*Idam Bhagvatam Nam Puranam Brahma Sambhitam,*
*Uttam Shlor Charitam Chakar Bhagwanarashi.*

During the twilight of *Dwapar Yuga*, Maharashi Ved Vyas taught this scripture to his son Shukdev. The origin of *Srimad Bhagwad* is even older. In the tradition of *Srimad Bhagwad*, god Narayan himself narrated its content to Brahma. Brahma narrated it to Devarshi Narad who preached it to Badrayan Vyas. Vyas brought it into scriptural form and handed it to his son Shukdev. Shukdev, in his turn, preached *Srimad Bhagwad* to king Parikshit and Sutji. King Parikshit died soon after

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hearing it, while Sutji narrated this scripture to sages like Shaunak in Naimisharanya during his 1000 years' stay there.

*Puran Sanhitametamrishirnarayano Avyayam,*
*Naraday Pura Prah Krishndvai Paynay Sah.*
*Savai Mahym Maharaj Bhagvan Badrayanah,*
*Imam Bhagwadi Pritah Sanhitam Ved Sammitam.*

*Etam Vakshvyasav Sut Rishtibmyo Naimishalaye,*
*Dirghsatare Kurushreshth Sampushrah*
*Shuanakadibhimi.*

The greatest feature of *Bhagwad* is that it illustrates the mutual but eternal relationship of the *jivatma* (microcosm) and *paramatma* (the supreme spirit.) It also illustrates the selfless dedication of the devotees and unconditional love of god for his devotees. Thus it introduces one to oneself and hence leads him to salvation. The author has beautifully woven the plays of god into enticing tales with the help of the yarns of knowledge, devotion and action:

*Vasudeve Bhagvati Bhakti Yoga Prayojitah,*
*Janyatya Shuvairagyam Gyanam Cha Yadhetukam.*
*Evam Prasann Manaso Bhagwad Bhaktiyogatam,*
*Bhagvatta Ttva Vigyanam Mukt Sangasy Jayate.*

This story of god attracts learned ones like Shiva, Sanak, Shuk, etc. as much as it pleases common people who are stricken with many kinds of evils. It is indeed a wealth for the lovers of *Bhagwad*, devotees and other religious people.

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*Tav Kathamritam Tapt Jivanam Kavidhiriditam Kalm Shapaham,*
*Shravan Mangalam Shrimadatatam, Bhuviganatite Bhurida Janam.*

Hence, the excellent, easily available and simple means to know the self is reciting, remembering and singing in praise of Lord Krishna. *Paramatma* (Lord) enters the heart of the devoted listener of *Hari Charitra* (virtues of god) in verbal form and destroys the blemishes present there.

*Sankirtyamano Bhagwananto Shri Tanubhavo Vyasanam Hi Punsham Pravishth Chintam Vidhu Notyshesham Yatha Tamorkoabhra Mivativatah.*

It is clear, therefore, that without resorting to any other difficult and mysterious means, one can afford his well-being simply by taking refuge in *Bhagwad.* Instead, dedicating himself to god and remembering him, one gets the love of god in his mundane life. Such an achievement is rare even for great ascetics.

*Ahoatidhanya Vraj Goramanyam Stanyamritam Pitmtn Tee Muda,*
*Ahobhagyamahobhagy Nand Gor Vrajaiksam,*
*Yanmicham Parmanandam Purnam Bramha Sanatanam.*

The Vedic name of the Pole Star is *Dhruva Nakshatra,* named after Dhruva, the son of king Uttanapad. At a very young age, Dhruva demonstrated such steadfast commitment to Lord Vishnu that he was blessed by Vishnu to take the position of the steadfast Pole Star.

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Let us hear the story of Dhruva which is taken from the *Bhagwad Purana*. Dhruva's father, king Uttanapad, was a great ruler of ancient India. He had two queens. The elder one, queen Suniti, was Dhruva's mother. queen Suruchi, the younger one, did not like her stepson, Dhruva and wanted her own son, Uttam, to become king. Unfortunately, king Uttanapad liked queen Suruchi better than queen Suniti and did not want to disagree with her even though Dhruva was older and was the rightful heir to the throne.

One day, little Dhruva went to sit on his father's lap along with his stepbrother, Uttam. But he was stopped by queen Suruchi's cruel words. 'You are not allowed in your father's lap,' she scolded. 'Only my son is allowed to sit on the King's lap. Pray to Lord Vishnu that you should die and be reborn as my son if you want to sit in your father's lap!' Deeply hurt, Dhruva went crying to his mother. But queen Suniti was helpless. 'Pray to Lord Vishnu,' she said. 'He will surely help you if you can pray long and hard enough.'

Dhruva made up his mind that he would go deep into the jungle to meditate on Lord Vishnu and would not return to the kingdom until the Lord had answered his prayers. On his way to the jungle, he met the eternal sage, Narada. Narada was concerned that Dhruva was too young to be in the jungle alone. He tried to dissuade Dhruva, warning him that he would be eaten up by wild animals if he stayed. But Dhruva was steadfast in his resolve. Satisfied that Dhruva had the mental strength to remain in the jungle, Narada taught Dhruva the art of meditation. Little Dhruva meditated for many months, giving up all worldly comforts. He even stopped eating. Lord Vishnu was amazed at the little boy's determination and finally appeared before him.

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He blessed the boy and told him to return to his kingdom.

In the meantime, king Uttanapad repented the injustice done to Dhruva. He was heartbroken at the thought of little Dhruva being devoured by wild beasts. Narada consoled him, telling him that Dhruva's resolve was firm and that he would receive Lord Vishnu's blessings. Narada was sure that Lord Vishnu would protect the boy from the wild animals.

When Dhruva finally returned safely home after receiving Lord Vishnu's blessings, king Uttanapad went personally to receive him. Queen Suniti was overjoyed at her son's safe return. In the course of time, when king Uttanapad became old, Dhruva was crowned king, and ruled wisely for many years.

The story of Dhruva is a lesson to us all. We do not have to wait until we are old to attain spirituality. Sincere, steadfast meditation of god helped such a young child overcome the obstacles thrown in his way. It can help us all.

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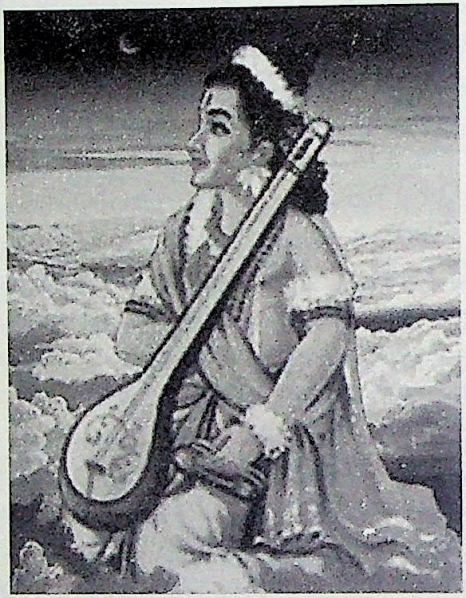
# Narada Purana



This is in the form of a narration by Narada to Sanatkumara. In this book of 25,000 verses, Narada teaches the *dharmas* of *Brhat kalpa*. If this is given as gift on the full-moon day in the month of *Asvina*, there will be great prosperity.

This *Purana* contains a synopsis of everything; it describes Jagannatha Puri, Dwaraka, Badrinatha, etc.

*Vedas* are regarded as the oldest scriptures in the entire known history of human civilisation. But even the *Vedas* speak about *Puranas*. A *shloka* in *Matsya Purana* says:

*Puraanam Sarvashastraanaam Prathamam Brahmanaa Smritam Anantaram Xha Vaktrebhyo Vedaastasya Vinirgatah.*

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Brahma recalled the *Puranas* even before starting the creation of other scriptures. The *Vedas* emerged thereafter from his mouth. This clearly shows the antiquity of *Puranas*.

There are in all 18 *Puranas*. Among them, *Narada Purana* is perhaps the most significant as it has been created by none other than the sage Narada.

*Nardoktam Puraanam Tu Naardiyam Prachachhate*

*Narada Purana* is what emerged from the lips of Maharshi Narada. Initially, it was a collection of about 25,000 stanzas. But, the currently available version of *Narada Purana* contains not more than 22,000 stanzas.

The whole content of *Narada Purana* has been divided into following parts.

## PART 1

### Penance of the Sages in Naimisharanya and Dialogue between Suta and the Sages

Once upon a time, about 26,000 sages assembled in the holy ambience of Naimisharanya. All of them had renounced their desires and homely comforts and were worshipping Lord Vishnu for the benefit of entire humanity.

During their stay in Naimisharanya, those sages called a huge assembly to discuss the means of attaining all the four goals of life— *dharma, arth, kama* and *moksha*. The great sage Shaunak was presiding over the assembly. He said: 'O sages! We have assembled here to discuss the most cryptic disciplines of life. But it is beyond my powers to answer the questions you have put before me. Only a great sage like Suta, who is the most learned disciple of Ved Vyas, is able to answer these

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questions. Presently, he lives in a hermitage in Siddhipeeth. Let us all go there and request him to preach to us the cryptic disciplines of life.'

Hearing these words, all the sages thanked Shaunak with joy. Then, led by Shaunak himself, all of them reached the hermitage of the sage Suta. At the hermitage, sage Suta welcomed them all and satisfied their queries. He said:

> O great sages! I narrate to you the great *Purana*, which was once narrated by the great saint Sanatkumara to Devarshi Narada and is now known as *Narada Purana*.

## PART 2

### Narada prays to Lord Vishnu

**Shaunak says: 'Sutaji, how did Sanatkumara unfold the mystic character of the religion to Narada? When and where did they have a meeting to hold this pious discussion? Kindly tell us in detail.'**

Sutaji says: 'The great sage Sanatkumara, who was free from illusions, was the creation of Brahma's imagination. He always remained engrossed in the worship of Brahma. Once, when he was going towards the peaks of the mighty Meru mountains (Himalayas) he happened to sight the sacred Ganges. He was about to take a dip in the waters when Devarshi Narada also arrived there. Devarshi Narada greeted his elder brother and took a bath in the river.

After carrying out the usual rituals, they sat there and started a discussion about the virtues of Lord Vishnu. Devarshi Narada asked: "O brother! How can one realise the Lord Vishnu? Who is the cause of this

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whole creation? What is the appearance of devotion, knowledge and penance? Kindly elaborate the mystery of treating guests also. Also tell me, how did Lord Vishnu effect the origin of Brahma and other gods?"

Sanatkumara says: "In the beginning of creation, the self-illuminating Lord Vishnu created Brahma from His right hand side, Rudra from his central part and Vishnu, his own replica from his left hand side. As Lord Vishnu is omnipresent, similarly his illusions are also omnipresent and known with different names like Lakshmi, Uma, Shakti and Chandi. These are the powers of Lord Vishnu. Some people identify these powers with the illusions created by the Lord whereas the sages regard them as nature."

'The gods, who protect the world, are *Purush*, and the supreme being, who is above these levels, is Lord. Nobody else is greater than He is. From His navel even Brahma has originated on a divine lotus. He is the Supreme Being, the eternal joy incorporating all the three virtues'.

'O Narada! My five senses—sight, sound, scent, touch and taste have originated from the ego. Ego is the origin of the other 11 senses also. These five senses in turn gave rise to five physical elements—ether, air, fire, water and earth. It was after the creation of these five physical elements that Brahma created the lower living beings. Then he created human beings followed by the creation of all the seven worlds and seven guards of these seven worlds. For the inhabitation of the living beings, Brahma also created great mountains, plains and seven seas.'

'Towards the north of the great saline sea and towards the south of the great Himalayas is situated the holy land of India. People who worship Lord Shiva

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and Lord Vishnu inhabit this land. Because of their virtues, even the gods worship the people who populate the Indian landmass. Those ignorant people, who do not seek salvation despite having been born in India, have to suffer the tortures of hell as long as the Sun and the Moon shine in the sky. The whole world, from Brahma to a seemingly unimportant blade of grass, is the manifestation of Vasudev (Lord Vishnu)'.

## PART 3

### Profile of Sage Markandeya

Sanatkumara says: 'O Sage! Faith has the greatest significance. Achievement of everything and appeasement of Lord Vishnu depend upon faith. Nothing is attainable without faith. Just as a human being faces inertia in the absence of life and is rendered motionless, similarly, faith is like a spiritual light without which religious actions of a man come to cease. Similarly, devotion is also known as the life of all the achievements. It is also the giver of four supreme goals of life—*dharma, arth, kama* and *moksha*. No action succeeds without the input of devotion and faith. Even menial jobs done with faith give everlasting results. On the contrary, even the pious actions of envious people go futile. Attainment of god by envious people is impossible.

Envy is the greatest enemy of a human being. It creates a gap as big as the one that separates the sky from the nether world. O Brahmanandan! Only those people, who remain engrossed in faithful devotion of god, attain the abode of Vishnu. Fallen are those who, despite having the knowledge of the *Vedas*, do not comply with the moral code of conduct of their clan. Neither the *Vedas* nor even devotion can salvage such

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people. In other words, moral conduct is everything. O great sage! Devotion is like a mother who is the base of life for every living being. O Narada! Company of the pious people and saints is the best means to cherish devotion. Saints are the teachers of the entire world. When the sins that have been accumulating throughout all the previous births decay only then one gets pious company and those who once get pious company experience eternal joy.'

Narada says: 'O great devotee of Lord Vishnu! Kindly relate the actions and appearance of the Lord's devotees to me.'

Sanatkumara says: 'During the period of pralay, when all the world was inundated, Lord Vishnu was sleeping on a banyan leaf. That scene had amazed Markandeya, the supreme devotee of the Lord.'

The sages asked: 'When all the world was inundated, how did Markandeya escape? Sutaji, kindly remove our doubt.'

Sutaji says: 'O great sages! Now, I am going to narrate the tale of Markandeya. Listen to it carefully.'

Once upon a time, there lived a fortunate sage in the pious land of India. The sage was famous as Mrikandu. He had observed a very severe penance at the holy pilgrimage centre of Shaligram. His penance began to cause worry to Indra. So, accompanied by other gods, Indra reached Lord Vishnu who was resting on *sheshnaag* in Ksheersagar, the ocean of milk. The gods prayed to the Lord to protect them from the radiance of Mrikandu. Listening to the prayers offered by the gods, Lord Vishnu appeared in his four-armed form holding a conch, wheel, mace and lotus in each of those arms. His radiance was enough to beat the shine of a

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crore suns. His radiance caused tremendous joy to the gods who fell flat at the feet of the Lord.

The Lord said: 'O gods! Get up. I am fully aware about your miseries. But your worries are meaningless because Maharshi Mrikandu is really a gentleman. He is not going to harm you in any way. Even if the situation arises, I am always ready to protect you.'

Saying these words, the Lord disappeared. Thus assured by the Lord's words, the gods also returned to their abode. On the other hand, pleased by Mrikandu's penance, the Lord appeared before him. As soon as Mrikandu opened his eyes, he saw Lord Vishnu standing before him. The Lord's four-armed, blue and radiant appearance caused great exhilaration for Mrikandu. He fell flat at his feet and prayed to him with tearful eyes. Pleased with his prayers, Lord asked Mrikandu to seek a boon. But Mrikandu refused saying that he had attained salvation just by seeing him. Still, the Lord said that his appearance never goes in vain. So, I will be your son who will live a long life. Granting this boon, the Lord disappeared.

## PART 4

### Tale of Sage Markandeya

Narada says: 'O great sage! Why did Lord Vishnu appear as the son of Mrikandu? What did he do as his son? The *Puranas* say that during the *pralay*, Markandeya had witnessed the direct appearance of Lord Vishnu's illusion. Kindly narrate these things in detail.'

Sanatkumara says: 'Listen O Devarshi! After observing severe penance, sage Mrikandu got married and received an equally virtuous and chaste wife. In

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the tenth month after their marriage, his wife gave birth to an extremely beautiful baby. The baby in fact had incorporated the radiance of the Lord. Mrikandu carried out all the necessary rituals and consecrations of the baby happily. In his fifth year, he carried out the thread ceremony of his son and started to educate him in the *Vedas*. His education developed all the pious virtues in his son whom he had named Markandeya. After finishing his education, sage Markandeya also started a severe penance to please Lord Vishnu.

Pleased by his penance, Lord Vishnu blessed him with a boon of creating *Purana Samhita*. This is the reason why sage Markandeya is also known as Narayan. O Brahmins! Lord Vishnu did not annihilate Markandeya during the *pralay* only to show him his illusions. It was due to this grace that Markandeya survived *pralay* and passed that time floating on a banyan leaf. As long as the Lord slept, Markandeya kept floating on that leaf. As long as the night of the Lord lasted, Markandeya stayed on that flimsy leaf. At the end of the night, when the inundating *pralay* receded and the Lord awakened from his prolonged sleep, he began the work of creation again. It was even more amazing for Markandeya to see the inundating water recede and new creation taking place. He began to pray to the Lord with folded hands. Pleased by his prayers, the Lord said that he always protected his devotees even during the most severe crises. Markandeya then asked about the appearance of the true devotees of the Lord. He also expressed his curiosity to know the reasons of their birth.

Lord Vishnu says: "O great among the sages! The greatest devotees are those who do not harm others with their mind, words and actions and who are free from envy. Those who have an impartial view are best among

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the devotees. Those who protect the human beings, cows, Brahmins, vegetation and remain engrossed in discussion of Lord's virtues. Those who salute the garden of basil and put the earth from basil's roots on their heads, those who are beloved to Lord Shiva, put *tripund* on their forehead and worship Him performing Yagyas facing south. Those who always donate water and cereals, cows and daughters are the excellent among all the devotees. O great sage! These are some of the characteristics of a true devotee. Cherish these characteristics and you will also attain salvation in the last." Thus preaching, Lord Vishnu disappeared. Markandeya thereafter led a pious life and observed penance and in the last he too attained to the supreme abode of the Lord.

## PART 5

### The Greatness of the Ganges

Sutaji says, "The glorious description of devotion for Lord Vishnu caused extreme joy for Narada."

Narada says: "O great sage Sanat! Now kindly tell me about such a place of pilgrimage which is even holier than the holiest places of pilgrimage."

Sanatkumara "says: O Narada! The confluence of Ganga and Yamuna is holier than any other place of pilgrimage. The extremely sacred and pious Ganga rises from the feet of none other than Lord Vishnu. Yamuna on the other hand is the daughter of Surya. Even the remembrance of Ganga is enough to do away with all the sins and making one peaceful.

This place where Ganga and Yamuna merge is famous as Prayag in the world. It is the same place where Brahma had once invoked Lord Vishnu in a *yagya*. Since

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then, innumerable sages have followed Brahma and performed different kinds of *yagyas* there. Even a person who recites the name of Ganga hundred miles from Prayag attains salvation. Smearing the sand of Ganga's bank on the forehead is in a way bearing the crescent-shaped Moon on the head. Those who remember Ganga receive the benefit of performing pilgrimage to all the holy places. Among other places of pilgrimage, Varanasi has almost equal significance as that of Prayag. O Brahmin! Ganga is the mother of the entire world. A mere touch of her sacred waters salved the 60,000 sons of Sagar. No one can describe the greatness of Ganga."

## PART 6

### Fate of King Baahu

Narada says: 'O great sage, who in the dynasty of Sagar received salvation from *Preta Bhava*. Who was Sagar? Kindly narrate his whole story to me.'

Sanatkumara says: 'Long ago, there was a king named Baahu in the dynasty of Surya. He was very religious in nature and looked after his subjects like his own offspring. Everyone was happy in his kingdom, which he ruled with polity and justice'.

'But destiny was playing another game with the king. With time, evils like envy and ego began to rise in the mind of Baahu. He began to think that nobody else was as religious as he was. These evils in turn caused the king to incline towards sensual pleasures. O Narada! An unconscious mind is the greatest cause of destruction. Everyone, even the better half, begin to nurture hostility against such a person. The same thing happened with king Baahu. Many neighbouring kings together launched a massive attack on the kingdom of Baahu and defeated him after a month-long fierce battle.

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After his defeat, king Baahu left his kingdom and began to wander along with his queens. At last, he came to stay beside a big lake. Even the local inhabitants and lower creatures hid on seeing the king approach. His subjects too had lost their sympathies for him.

Now the life of the king was not more than death. So, repenting his condition, King Baahu met his death in the presence of Sage Aurv. At that time, his youngest queen was expecting an issue. After her husband's death, she decided to commit *sati*. But, Sage Aurv prevented her convincing her that her woul-be son would enjoy more popularity than his father had. Besides, nothing is more wretched than killing an unborn baby. Thus, convincing the queen with all means, Sage Aurv guided the queens to perform the cremation of their husband and other rituals. Since then, both the queens began to live in the hermitage of Sage Aurv.'

## PART 7

### The Birth of Sagar

Sanatkumara says: 'O Narada! Both the queens were passing their time in the hermitage of Sage Aurv. When half the rainy season had passed, the elder queen began to cultivate evil feelings for the younger. She, therefore, deceitfully made the younger queen consume poison. But the poison could not affect the queen and her unborn baby because of the virtues she had acquired serving Sage Aurv. After three months, the younger queen gave birth to a son. Sage Aurv carried out the necessary rituals and consecrations of the child and named him Sagar because he was born with the effect of poison.'

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'Sagar began to grow in Aurv's hermitage. The sage had started to train the boy in weaponry. One day, out of curiosity, Sagar asked his mother about his father. His mother related to him all the events that had taken place with his father, king Baahu, her husband. Listening to the fate of his father, Sagar took an oath to destroy all those who had caused misery to his father. Circumambulating his teacher, Aurv, and taking his mother's permission, Sagar at once set out on his mission. His first halt was at the hermitage of Sage Vashishta.

Sagar narrated everything to Sage Vashishta. Sage Vashishta presented him with a number of divine weapons and saw him off blessing him with a boon for victory. Armed with many divine weapons and the blessings of his mother and teachers, Sagar defeated even the most powerful enemies of his father in no time and established his rule over the entire earth. The defeated kings took asylum in the hermitage of Sage Vashishta who encouraged them to be fearless. Spies, on the other hand, informed Sagar about this development. Sagar at once set out to the hermitage of Vashishta with an intention of exterminating those kings but meanwhile Sage Vashishta had got all the kings shaven. So, assuming that his enemies were dead, Sagar mockingly said to Sage Vashishta: "O Sage! Why are you guarding these characterless creatures? I will not spare their lives."

Vashishta says: "O son! You are great. Now listen to me carefully for your benefit. I have already killed your enemies, so you will not gain anything by killing them again. O king! This physical body is the root of all the sins. You will not receive popularity killing the physical body. So, give this matter a little thought before

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killing them." The words of Sage Vashishta soothed Sagar's anger. Thereafter, Sage Vashishta carried out the coronation of Sagar.

King Sagar had two wives, Keshini and Sumati. Both were the daughters of Vidharba's King Kashyap. When Sage Aurv heard about Sagar's coronation, he visited his palace and returned after preaching to him. Some months later, with a desire of having sons, both the queens secretly summoned Sage Aurv once again and received the talisman for having sons. Meditating for a while, Sage Aurv said: "O fortunate ones! One of you will receive a son who will continue his progeny in future and the other will have 60,000 powerful sons."

The sage also advised them to seek the boon of their respective choices. With time, Keshini gave birth to one son Asmanjas who grew to be a whimsical person. Sumati gave birth to 60,000 sons who were very obedient initially but following Asmanjas, they too began to behave whimsically. Asmanjas had one son, Anshuman who was very obedient to his grandfather. The 60,000 sons of Sagar soon began to torment all the three worlds. Perplexed by their atrocities, Indra appealed to Sage Kapil to rid them of their woes. With the inspiration of Sage Kapil, Sagar organised an *Ashwamedha Yagya*. Indra kidnapped the horse of the *yagya* and tethered it at the hermitage of Sage Kapil. When all the 60,000 princes reached Kapil's hermitage, they began to abuse him seeing the horse there. Infuriated, Kapil at once incinerated them with his curse. King Sagar then sent Anshuman in search of his 60,000 sons and recover the horse. Sage Kapil assured Anshuman that his grandson Bhagirath would please Ganga to descend and save his ancestors.'

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## PART 8

### Salvation of Saudas

Narada says: 'O great brother! Why did Sage Vashishta curse Saudas and how did he recover from this curse by the virtue of the water of the Ganges?'

Sanatkumara says: 'O Narada! Saudas was a virtuous king. He ruled over his subjects religiously. He was very fond of hunting. So, one day he went hunting in the forest. He continued his excursion all day long. Towards evening, he reached the bank of Godavari and decided to pass the night there. The next morning he began his hunting excursion once again. During the hunting, he spotted a deer and began to chase it. Chasing the deer, he reached the core of the forest.

There, the king saw a pair of tigers copulating. Saudas was an expert archer. He trained an arrow and killed the tigress in just one shot. As soon as the tigress died, she assumed the form of an enormous ogress. The death of his partner infuriated the tiger, which was in fact a monster in disguise. He decided to avenge the death of his mate. The whole event frightened the king. He held a hasty parley with his ministers. They unanimously took a decision to give up hunting forever.

Long afterwards, king Saudas organised an *Ashwamedha Yagya* under the auspices of Sage Vashishta. At the completion of the *yagya*, Sage Vashishta went to take a bath before his meal. Meanwhile, the monster appeared there in the guise of Vashishta and expressed his desire to eat meat. Then, in the guise of a cook, the monster cooked human flesh and served it in golden bowls. When Sage Vashishta arrived, Saudas offered him the dishes made of human flesh. For a while, Vashishta was amazed but soon he

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realised the truth. Indignantly, he cursed the king to become a man-eating demon.

The king tried to assert his ignorance and said: "You yourself had expressed your desire to eat meat." With his divine sight, Sage Vashishta learnt that the king had been tricked. By then, the king himself got ready to curse the sage in retaliation. But his prudent wife Madayanti stopped him. Thus, convinced by the queen, the anger of Saudas subsided. But he had taken water in his palm, so the problem arose where to dispose it of for it was sure to burn anything it fell upon. After a little consideration, the king dropped that water right on his feet which burnt immediately. Sage Vashishta then consoled him, saying: "O king! Imprudence is the root of all the obstacles and crises. But O king! You have no reason to be sorry. Your miseries will end soon and you will regain your original radiance by the virtue of the Ganges' waters." Saying this, Sage Vashishta returned to his hermitage.

The whole body of the king had turned black. Since then, he began to roam in the forests like a wild animal. There he ate whatever he found—animals, birds, even human beings. Within six months, he devoured all the animals in 100 *yojan* expanse of the forest. Then he migrated to another area in the forest. One day, in the guise of a monster, Saudas was wandering in a forest on the bank of Narmada. There he spotted a sage couple engaged in carnal conjugation. Saudas at once got hold of the sage and began to devour him.

The sage's wife pleaded with him to release her husband but Saudas did not pay heed to her pleas and devoured the sage. In anguish and anger, the Brahmini cursed Saudas that he would die if he tried to copulate with a woman and that he would always remain a

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monster. Infuriated, Saudas cursed her in retaliation: "O evil one! Just one curse was sufficient. Why did you pour down two curses on me? Go and become a devil." Brahmini at once turned into a devil. Afterwards, both of them began to wander in the forest. One day, they reached a part of the forest where another monster was living. That monster too had acquired a formidable appearance because of not obeying his teacher. Seeing them, the monster enquired about the reasons for their coming to that forest. They narrated everything to him.

Saudas said: "O friend! Who are you? Tell me, what sins did you commit? Do not conceal anything from your friends."

The monster said: "Before acquiring this appearance, I was a Brahmin and well versed in all the *Vedas*. I lived in Magadh. One day, blinded by my knowledge and youth, I insulted my teacher. That is the reason for my acquiring this monster's appearance. Since then, I have been eating flesh only and I do not know how many Brahmins I have devoured so far. Still, my hunger is insatiated. Hence I advise each and everyone never to insult their teachers."

Saudas said: "What is a teacher? Who was your teacher?"

The monster says: "O brother! There are many kinds of teachers but I am telling about the most revered ones. All including the teachers of the *Vedas*, preachers of scriptures and *mantras*, remover of doubts, protectors, wife's father, elder brother, mother's brother, family priest and own mother and father fall in the category of teachers.

I had received preaching about all the religions from Sage Gautam while staying on the enchanting banks of the Ganges. Once, when I went to worship Shiva, I did

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not greet him. Sage Gautam did not mind my behaviour but Lord Shiva turned me into a monster out of anger."

This pious discussion among the monsters attenuated their sins. In the meantime, a Brahmin, who hailed from Kalinga (Orrisa), arrived there carrying the holy water of Ganges. The monsters requested the Brahmin to sprinkle some of the water over them. They also narrated the greatness of Ganges before the Brahmin. Pleased with their willingness and appraisal of the Ganges, the Brahmin sprinkled some holy water on them. The monster and the ogress resumed their divine appearance but Saudas remained unchanged. His worries began to mount but the invisible Saraswati consoled and advised him to recite the Lord's name. Saudas then migrated to Varanasi where he continuously recited the Lord's name and took bath in the holy Ganges. Thus, he overcame the curse of Brahmini and returned to his kingdom. There, Sage Vashishta once again carried out his coronation. After that Saudas ruled his kingdom through religious means and attained the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu.'

## PART 9

### King Bali Defeats the Gods

Narada says: "O brother! Kindly narrate the tale of the origin of the Ganges from the feet of Lord Vishnu."

Sanatkumara says: Long ago, in the beginning of creation, one Sage Kashyap had two wives, Diti and Aditi. Both were the daughters of Daksha. Aditi was the mother of the gods while Diti had given birth to demons. Thus, the demons and the gods were stepbrothers and fought accordingly for power and prestige. Demons were elder. Hiranyakashyap, the

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demon king was the son of Diti. His son Prahlad was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. In the lineage of Prahlad, occurred the great King Bali who was the son of Virochan.

Bali had conquered the entire earth and was now eyeing heaven. Bali had two ministers, Kubhand and Koopkarna and an equally powerful son Baan. With a huge army, Bali launched a massive attack on heaven and soon a fierce battle broke out. The battle lasted 1,000 years. At last, the gods lost the heaven to the demons and began to wander here and there in search of solace. After defeating the gods, king Bali organised many *Ashwamedha Yagyas*. Feeling sorry for the plight of her sons, Aditi went into a severe penance on the Himalayas.

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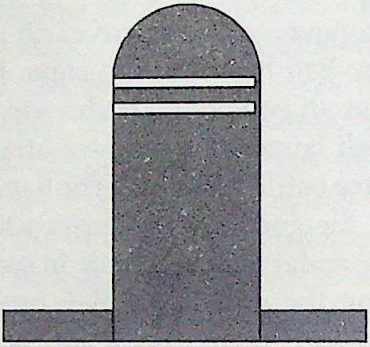
# Linga Purana



This contains instructions on *dharma* by Shiva, sitting in the form of *linga* (phallus). The 28 different forms of Shiva are described in this. There are eleven thousand verses and if this book is given as a gift to a Brahmin with *tiladhenu* on the full-moon day in the month of *Phalguna* (March) the donor will attain *Shivasayujya*.

It contains the glory of Lord Nrismhadeva, Janardhana, the story of Ambarisha and the glories of Gayatri.

This is the fifth *Purana*. Preaching the greatness of Lord Shiva and propagation of *Ling puja* (worship of *Shivaling*) are the main objectives of this *Purana*. This *Purana* has five parts.

**Part 1**

This comprises of a description of the creation, origin of *Ling* and its worship, yagya by Daksha, immolation of Madan (*Kamadev*), wedding of Lord Shiva, tale of Varaha, tale of Narasimha and description of Surya and Soma *vansh*.

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**Part 2**

This contains greatness of Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma becomes the creator, incarnations of Shiva during various *Dwapar Yugas*, Dadhichi subjugates the sages and Shilad's impossible demand.

**Part 3**

Here we have manifestation of Lord Nandishwar, *Kali Yuga*, the Seven Islands, the Meru Mountain, the Prominent mountains, Lord Brahma assigns lordships to the deities and the radiance of Surya.

**Part 4**

This contains Dhruva—the Supreme devotee, the origin of deities, the lineage of Aaditya, Yadu dynasty, appointment of Andhak as the lord of Ganas, the liberation of earth, killing of Jalandhar and the origin of Lord Ganesh.

**Part 5**

This describes the story of Upamanyu, greatness of Dwadakshar *mantra*, greatness of Shadakshar *mantra*, the majestic Lord Maheshwar, the Sun manifestation of Shiva's power, importance of guru, installation of Shivaling, Vajreshwari Vidya and different types of yoga.

As per the *Purana*, a fiery *Shivaling* appeared after the *pralaya*. From this *Shivaling* emerged all the *Vedas* and other scriptures, even Brahma, Vishnu and all other deities. The current prevalence of worship of *Shivaling* and idols seems to be an outcome of this *Purana*.

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# *Padma Purana*

This Purana comprises 55,000 verses. If this *Purana* is given as a gift with a cow in the month of *Jyestha* (June), it brings prosperity.

Second among the 18 *Puranas*, the *Padma Purana* contains five parts: *Srishtikhanda, Bhumikhanda, Swargakhanda, Patalakhanda* and *Uttarakhanda*.

*Srishtikhanda* contains an explanation of metaphysical knowledge in a dialogue style between Bheeshma and Sage Pulastya. It contains a description of Pushkar *Tirth*. Surprisingly, this part ridicules the worship of the planets (*grahas*).

*Bhumikhanda* has a description of the earth, besides the tales of kings like Prithu, Nahush, Yayati and Prabhriti and sages like Shiva Varma, Suvrata and Chyvan. For its description of the earth and archaic matter, this part is often regarded as the geography and the history of a period.

*Swargakhanda* describes the sequence of creation first and then the glory of the holy places as well as the geographical expansion of India along with her mountains, rivers and people.

In *Patalakhanda*, Sutaji narrates the tales related to the life and plays of Lord Rama in an assembly of sages. This part also contains a description about the life and plays of Lord Krishna.

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*Uttarakhanda* contains a discussion about the metaphysical knowledge of religion presented in a dialogue style between Lord Shiva and Parvati. This part also contains the 1,000 names of Lord Vishnu and 100 names of Lord Rama.

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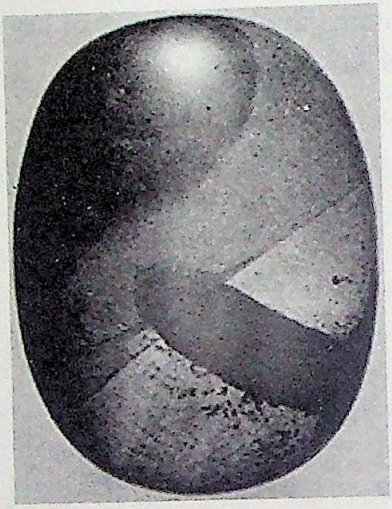
# *Brahmanda Purana*



This deals with the origin of the universe as told by Brahma. In the beginning there was a golden egg and the *prapanca* (universe with its activities) was formed out of it. Portions of *Adhyatma Ramayana,* references to Radha and Krishna and the incarnation of Parasu rama are included in this. This book contains twelve thousand verses and it is believed to be *uttama* (best) to give this book as a gift to a brahmin. It describes the Vedangas and the *Adi Kalpa.*

This is the 18th *Purana*. Presently available in separate parts, *Adhyatma Ramayana* is also included in this *Purana,* but the present versions of *Brahmanda Purana* do not contain *Adhyatma Ramaya*n. It has four parts: *Prakriya, Anushanga, Upotaghat* and *Upasamhar*. This *Purana* is said to be narrated by Sutaji on the bank of the river Drishdvati in *Yaksh kshetra* (identified with Sutlej in modern Himachal Pradesh). From his

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narration, it is clear that Sutaji had heard the *Purana* from Ved Vyas who, in his turn, received it from Vayudev.

This contains a description of creation of the universe, determination of Kalpa, differentiation of *Yugas*, description of *Manvantaras*, description of Jambu dvipa and Bharatvarsh, description of Kimpurush Anudweep and Ketumaal *varsh*, etc. and description of Bharat *vansha*, Prithu vansha, Dev *vansha*, Rishi *vansha*, Agni *vansha* and preceptors.

Described in the *Purana, Adhyatma Ramayana* has seven parts. The first part describes the *Brahmaswarup* (cosmic appearance) of Shri Rama, incarnation of Lord Rama to relieve the earth from the atrocities of the demons, *Baal leela* (childhood plays), emancipation of Ahilya and removal of Bhargava's (Parashurama's) ego. The second part contains Lord Rama's going into exile, demise of Dashrath, third is *Aranya khanda* which describes killing of the illusionary deer and abduction of Sita. Fourth is *Kishkindha khanda* that describes the killing of Baali, and search of Sita. The *Sundar khanda* has the tales of Hanuman's entry into Lanka. *Lanka khanda* contains a description of the killing of Ravana and coronation of Lord Rama upon his return to Ayodhya. In *Uttar khand* reasons for Ravana's birth have been described. It also contains the description of Sita's desertion by Rama, desertion of Lakshmana, coronation of Luv and Kush, and departure of Rama to his original *Vaikunth loka*.

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# *Dharma* as Basis of the *Puranas*

*Dharma* or duty forms the basis of Puranic ethics. It embraces all those factors which contribute to the progress and well-being of individual society and the world at large.

These factors include possession of:

(a) *Gunas*—virtues
(b) *Karma*—discharge of one's duty.

The *Puranas* recognise two types of *dharma*:

(a) *Sadharana*—generic
(b) *Visesa* also known as *Svadharma*—specific.

In the world family of unmoving (*sthavara*) and moving (*jangarna*) creation, the lives in the different types and grades of creation are mutually linked. The factors contributing to the progress and welfare of one's life do and should contribute to the well-being of another life also.

Now mark the eternal truth in the *Puranas*, the significance of which we little realise in our day-to-day behaviour:

> *Individual happiness, to be real and lasting, should make for the happiness of the lives around that individual,*

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*otherwise it will turn out to be unreal, impermanent and painful.*

It further explains that between individual and social duties there is no conflict:

*The individual who forms an integral part of human society owes a duty to himself and to those around him. The society rises or sinks with him. Hence in the interest of society, he must raise himself to his fullest stature. It is both an individual and social duty.*

*Dharma* thus contributes to the preservation, progress and welfare of human society, and in a wider sense, of the whole world. In the scheme of life's eternal values, i.e., *pursharthas, dharma* occupies the premier and basic place. It is considered to be the best kith and kin for the embodied soul following it even in death and also to be the perennial source of perfection and bliss.

The waning strength and stability of *dharma* in the four *yugas* is graphically depicted by representing it as a majestic bull which stood firm on its four legs in the golden age of the world, i.e., *krtayuga* and lost one of its legs in the succeeding two *yugas,* viz. *Tsretas* and *dvapara* to stand tottering on a single leg during the present *kali yuga.*

The *Puranas* have made a successful attempt at reconciling *sadharana dharma* with *svadharma*. The former includes the possession of certain humanising virtues and actions based thereon, which are conducive to the welfare of the *entire* creation. The latter is a practical application of the former within a particular *sphere* by an individual belonging to a class

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characterised by certain prominent qualities, that is *gunas*.

Lastly the scheme of *varna* and *assama dharma* which the *Puranas* unanimously advocate, is based upon the duties of the individual of a class and has as its aim the efficiency, welfare, smooth working and material and spiritual perfection of society as a whole.

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# The *Puranas* and Sadharana *Dharma*

Teachings of *sadharana dharma* in the *Puranas* include inculcation of such virtues and actions as would be conducive to the welfare of the entire creation. They are universal in scope and eternal in nature.

The *Padma, Agni, Kurma* and *Garuda Purana* enumerate them as under:

(a) *Ahimsa*—non injury
(b) *Ksama* or *Ksanti*—forbearance
(c) *Indriyanigraha* or *sama* and *dama*—self-control
(d) *Daya*—compassion
(e) *Dana*—charity
(f) *Sauca*—purity
(g) *Satya*—truth
(h) *Tapas*—penance
(i) *Jnana*—wisdom

*Dhrti* and *adrodha*, i.e., fortitude and freedom from anger mentioned in other *Puranas* are only aspects of *ksama*. *Tyaga*, i.e., renunciation is implied by *dana*. *Asteyor*, i.e., non stealing and *arjaria*, i.e., uprightness are aspects of *satya*. *Jnana* comprehends *vidya*, *tapa* includes *brahmacharya*, i.e., celibacy, *dhyana*, i.e., meditation, *ijya*, i.e., sacrifice, and *devapuja*, i.e., worship of gods. *Priyavadita*, i.e., sweet speech, *apaisunyam*, i.e., freedom from backbiting, *alobha*, i.e., freedom from avarice, and

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*anasuya*, i.e., freedom from jealousy are comprehended in *ahimsa*.

**Ahimsa**

*Ahimsa* is declared as the *dharma* par excellence. It comprehends all other *dharmas*, *ksama*, *daya*, *sauca*, and *satya* which result in the eschewing of injury to others and are rooted in *ahimsa*. It is based on the fundamental conception that the lives in the world from the highest to the lowest are mutually linked. Any part of it can suffer harm only at the risk of another part and ultimately of the whole, just as the defect in a nut or screw affects adversely the smooth working of the entire machine.

The ten varieties of injury enumerated in the *Agni Purana* include not only the causing of different grades of physical pain, but also backbiting, obstructing another's good and betrayal of trust. The kind treat all beings alike, whether man or mosquito, for they all belong to the same family of creation. Those who inflict pain are reborn with defective faculties.

According to *Brahma Purana* one who neither kills nor causes killing nor approves of it attains bliss and divinity and best pleases God.

*Ahimsa* rests on the practice of virtues like *daya* and the avoidance of vices like *kasma*, i.e., from *krodha*, i.e., anger. Since the vices have their roots in the absence of self-control, control of the senses is an indispensable prerequisite for practising *ahimsa*.

The ethic of *ahimsa* is expressed in the significant expression of the *Padma Purana*.

*Do not do unto others, what you do not desire for yourself.*

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Behind this ethic lies the knowledge of the *atman*, i.e., supreme soul as imminent in all creatures. This is *atmajnana* and one who possesses it will not injure other creatures. It leads to the highest bliss.

**Satya**

*Satya* is another aspect of *dharma*. Its greatness is illustrated in the *Puranas* through such stories as of Harischandra and Rukmangada. It is the highest *dharma*. According to *Brahma Purana*, the world is supported on *satya*. It purifies speech. It is the source of happiness and bliss. The *Vishnu Purana* condemns even a palatable lie. All laws of nature are expressions of truth and work with perfect accuracy and changelessness. *Satya* contributes to the welfare and harmony of society as a whole. It engenders mutual trust and binds the individuals together. Distrust, deceit and betrayal jeopardise harmony of society. The ethic of *satya* is based on conception of the unity of the self. It promotes unity and is an ethical and social virtue.

**Sauca**

Purity is a social ethical virtue. It ensures a healthy life. Its external and internal aspects which are mutually complementary are mentioned in the *Agni Purana*. The former is achieved through cleansing with water and other materials and the latter through cleansing the mind of its impurities.

Evil propensities like desire and anger have to be cleansed through the spirit of renunciation and forbearance. These are *sattvika* qualities making for enlightenment and have to be developed by a system of discipline consisting of control of the senses and austerity.

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The *Agni Purana* speaks of the mental, vocal and physical aspects of *tapas*, i.e., austerity in eschewing desires, chanting prayers, and worshipping god. Disinterested actions also purify the mind. In fact, very good thoughts, words and deeds fulfill this purpose. Its purifying and sublimating power is specially stressed in the *Vishnu* and the *Bhagwad Puranas*.

A person pure in mind will not act in a way detrimental to another's interests. It shapes the destiny of an individual and of the society to which he belongs. Purity is to be observed not only for ourselves but also for the sake of others around us. It is a social virtue. Its practice can help in much-needed harmony and peace among individuals and society.

**Dana**

Charity is a social duty based on the ethical virtues stressed in the *Puranas*. Its greatness is illustrated through such stories as those of Sibi, Karna and Dadhiei. The ethics of charity benefits both the giver and the receiver while it humanises and sublimates the giver it materially benefits the receiver; and is conducive to contentment and harmony in society allowing for fair distribution of riches.

The ideal *dana* of the *sattvika* type which is done in the spirit of duty and detachment is command because it benefits the good and the needy. The *rajas* and the *tamasa* types are condemned as they are performed for name and fame in a haughty spirit. They only demoralise the giver. The *Padma Purana* classifies *dana* into four types:

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2. *Naimittika*

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3. *Kamya*
4. *Vimala*

*Nitya* consists in the daily offering of gifts to the deserving in a spirit of duty without expecting any reward;

*Naimittika* is given to the learned on special occasions for expiating sins;

*Kamya* is what is offered for obtaining material prosperity in the form of wealth and progeny;

*Vimala*, the fourth and the best, so called because it is pure being given to the enlightened in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.

In a wider sense, *dana* includes acts such as digging wells, tanks and canals and constructing parks, hospitals and temples. Gifts and charitable acts lead one to heaven.

The *Brahma Purana* emphatically declares that the purpose of wealth is its proper distribution among the needy. *Dana* is practical ethics which promotes peace and harmony in society by favouring economic equilibrium.

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# The *Puranas* and Stress Management

During a crisis or when anyone confronts a problem or a set of problems and finds no solution in spite of all his efforts, he is led to invoking supernatural remedies not knowing or understanding the rationale behind this. The *Puranas* can come to your rescue and provide complete enlightenment in such situations.

The *Puranas* have been studied for centuries, and are still read by the people of this country because these works have shown them the easiest way of attaining peace and perfection in life and have put forth, often in the form of myths and stories, easy solutions to those difficult problems which one is sure to confront in one's life. It enables one to manage stressful conditions—personal, social and national.

As a matter of fact, the *Puranas* have rendered the greatest service in effecting the racial and religious unification of the diverse people of India. They have treated every religious faith of the soil, unless it was dogmatically atheistic, with respect and with a sympathetic attitude, and accorded to it a position in the Puranic pantheism by explaining its deity and its principles through a reconciliation of the teachings of Samkhya and Vedanta.

It is the *Puranas* which have brought about unity in diversity, and taught religious toleration to the followers of different faiths by making them realise that God is one, though called by different names. It is mainly

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through these works that the Vedic ideas and ideals of religion and society have survived up to the present day and got wide circulation among the people of India and outside. The *Puranas* are, therefore, perfectly justified when they say:

> *'Yo vidyaccaturo vedan sangopanisado dvijah*
> *Na cet puranam samvidyan naiva sa syad vicaksanah*
> *Itilasa puranabhyam vedam samupabrmhayet*
> *Bibhety alpa-srutad vedo mam ayam praharisyati.'*

That twice-born (*Brahmana*), who knows the four *Vedas* with the *Angas* (supplementary sciences) and the *Upanishads*, should not be (regarded as) proficient unless he thoroughly knows the *Puranas*. He should reinforce the *Vedas* with *Itihasa* and the *Puranas*. The *Vedas* is afraid of him who is deficient in traditional knowledge (thinking) 'He will hurt me'. It thus helps us in various ways in stress management.

The harmony which the *Puranas* brought about in the doctrines of 'knowledge', 'action', and 'devotion', and in the Vedic and non-Vedic views of life and conduct, exerted its influence in all strata of Hindu society, with the result that the life of the average Hindu of the present day presents a texture into which various ideas and practices of different times and regions have been interwoven with an unparalleled symmetry.

In the eyes of a non-Hindu, Puranic culture and religion appear as a bundle of contradictions. Yet a Hindu finds nothing difficult or inconsistent in his ideas and practices and leads his life with perfect ease and harmony. He is rarely found to be absolutely foreign to the truths of life and conduct that his ancestors discovered for him.

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Even an illiterate Hindu, living far away from the seats of learning, is not totally ignorant of the principles and philosophical truths taught in the *Puranas*; and as a result he has a very broad view of life and a deep sense of tolerance and accommodation, which can rarely be expected elsewhere of a person like him.

This is so only because of the fact that the epics and the *Puranas* have played a very important part in the life of the Hindus for more than 2,000 years. They have brought home to the common man the wisdom of the saints of the highest order without creating any discord.

The authors of these works took every individual into consideration and made such prescriptions as would benefit him in his social and religious life. In giving recognition to a man's personal worth, they slackened the rigours of the caste system and declared, 'Being remembered, or talked of, or seen, or touched, a devotee of the Lord, even if he be a *chandala*, purifies (the people) easily'.

They allowed greater freedom to women and sudras in social and religious matters, with the result that these neglected members of Hindu society could have their own religious life and worship their deities themselves.

The religion and philosophy professed by the *Puranas* had such a great appeal that even scholars, philosophers or religious reformers like Vijnana Bhiksu, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Jiva Gosvamin, to mention only a few, very frequently drew upon the *Puranas* in their own works in support of their philosophical views; and this led to the greater popularity of these works with all sections of Hindu population.

Sectarian excesses are sometimes found in the extant *Puranas*, but these are due to the want of a proper

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understanding of the idea of absolute or unswerving devotion (*aikantiki bhakti*) on which the Puranic religion is principally based; and it is owing to this basic idea that Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and other deities have been praised individually as the highest one in some *Purana* or the other.

The *Puranas* have been utilised through centuries not only for educating the mass mind and infusing it with nobler ideas of life but also for tactfully solving the religious, social and economic problems which were created in ancient India by the rise of various religious movements and the repeated invasions made by foreign races.

A careful analysis of the devotional *vratas*, for instance will amply testify to the Puranic *Brahmana's* deep insight into human nature as well as to his intelligence in cleverly tackling the various problems and stressful conditions especially those relating to women, from whom the life and spirit of a race proceed.

It is undeniable that the extant *Puranas* can only on rare occasions claim for themselves any real merit as literary productions, but it must be admitted that in addition to their character as records of ancient geography and political history, they are of inestimable value from the point of view of the history of religion and culture of ancient Hindus.

As a matter of fact, these works afford us more than the other works of the time, a great insight into all phases and aspects of Hinduism as well as into the inner spirit of the Hindu social system with its adaptability in all ages and under all circumstances, however stressful and unfavourable. They, therefore, deserve a far more careful study than has hitherto been devoted to them.

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# Relevance of the *Puranas*

Mankind is in the midst of one of the greatest crises mainly due to the lack of adjustment of the human spirit to the development in science and technology. Nervous breakdowns are fairly endemic. Depression, anxiety and stress are generally treated or rather suppressed formally with antidepressants and informally, of course, with alcohol. This lack of adjustment and resulting maladies call for a repraisal of our classics like the *Puranas*.

The Puranic ethic is practical and utilitarian. It takes into consideration the welfare of society as a whole and prescribes caste and customary duties for the individual. The scheme of *varnasrama dharma* has this end in view.

While prescribing the practice of great virtues like self-discipline and renunciation as in the absolutist systems, it advocates their practice as far as they are practisable in consonance with *svadharma*. It is a synthesis of the ethical principles enunciated in the literature of the *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, and the *Upanishads*. The Vedic emphasis on truth, duty and respect for superiors receives greater emphasis in the *Puranas*.

The sacrificial cult of *Brahmana* literature is merged in the scheme of *varnasrama dharma*. The *Upanishadic* conception of the immanent soul is utilised here for inculcating equanimity, kindness and love towards all the grades of creation. Moreover, the *Puranas* attempt a

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rapprochement between the ritualistic ethics of Brahmanism and the moralistic ethics of Buddhism and Jainism.

The sacrificial cult of *Brahmana* literature appears here in a more popular and acceptable form in the form of the *panchamaha yajnas, sraddhas,* and other rites which eschew injury to and promote love for animal life. The scheme of *sadharana dharma* lays down general ethical principles common to all; and that of *svadharma* prescribes specific duties for the betterment and welfare of society.

The common good of all is the supreme standard and law according to which virtues are to be determined. Puranic ethics shows how one should lead a normal life of duties and responsibilities, and yet be in peace and contentment and in a state of equanimity and communion with God. The Bhakti cult is given a supreme place in the scheme of self-purification.

The law of *karma* and transmigration serves as a deterrent to evil and as a promoter of good in society. The scheme of fasting and other *vratas* helps to discipline and purify the mind. The system of religious ceremonies like *sraddhas* enables the individual to discharge his obligation in a spirit of detachment and to contribute to the balance of social economy.

The expiatory rites for the sins of omission and commission serve to rectify wrongs, to purify the mind, and thus to point out the right path of duty.

Thus Puranic ethics, besides synthesising the earlier ethics of the *Vedas,* the *Brahmanas,* and the *Upanishads* has embraced the ethics of Buddhism and Jainism also without detriment to the ethics of the earlier literature. It is highly practical and utilitarian.

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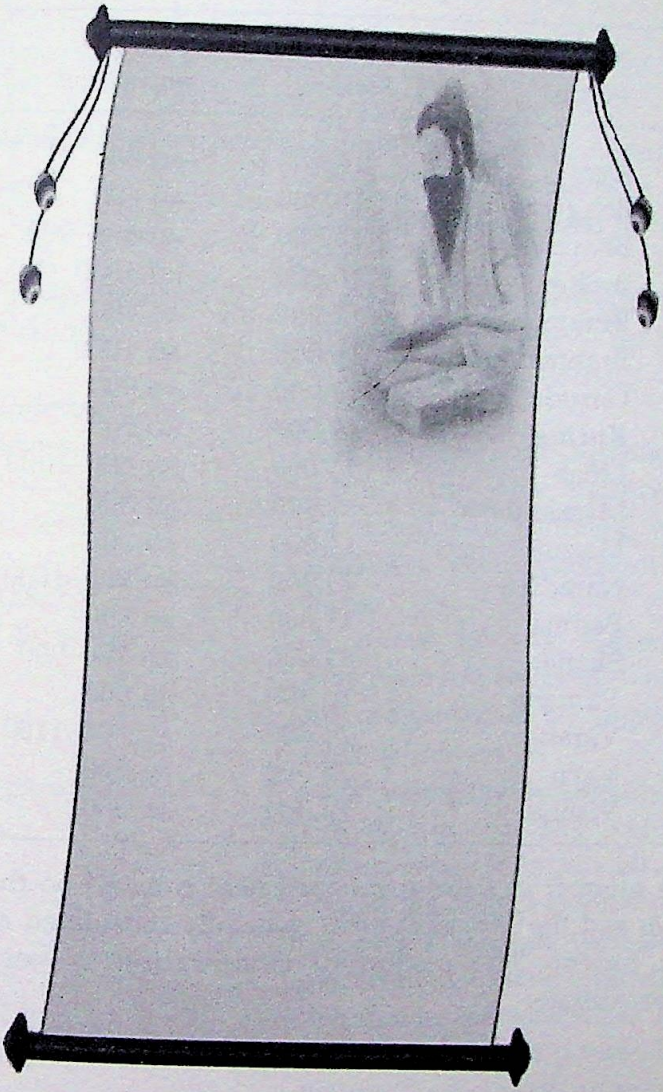
# Appendix



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## TABLE OF EIGHTEEN *MAHAPURANAS*

The following table gives an idea of the eighteen *Mahapuranas* as known to us now:

| *S. No.* | *Name of the Purana* | *Number of Slokas* | *Period of Composition* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Agni | 16,000 | AD 800 |
| 2. | Bhagwad | 18,000 | AD 600 |
| 3. | Bhavisya | 14,500 | AD 500–900 |
| 4. | Brahma | 10,000 | AD 1300 |
| 5. | Brahmanda | 12,000 | AD 400 |
| 6. | Brahmavaivata | 18,000 | AD 1000 |
| 7. | Garuda | 18,000 | AD 900 |
| 8. | Kurma | 18,000 | AD 500 |
| 9. | Liñga | 11,000 | AD 600–1000 |
| 10. | Markandeya | 9,000 | AD 300 |
| 11. | Matsya | 14,000 | AD 300 |
| 12. | Naradlya | 25,000 | AD 900–1600 |
| 13. | Padma | 55,000 | AD 800 |
| 14. | Skanda | 81,000 | AD 700–900 |
| 15. | Vamana | 10,000 | AD 900 |
| 16. | Varaha | 24,000 | AD 800–1100 |
| 17. | Vayu | 24,000 | AD 200 |
| 18. | Vishnu | 23,000 | AD 300 |

The number of *slokas* mentioned here is based on the *Vayu* and the *Matsya Puranas*, generally considered as the oldest. The period of compilation is very approximate.

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# Complete Glossary of the *Puranas*

*Abhaya Mudra (pose):* Symbol procuring security, 'pose' (fear not) the pose that indicates that one need have no fear.

*Abhayaranyam:* The forest where there is no fear.

*Abhijith:* The period of victory—the time when Rama was born.

*Abhisheka:* Surprise gift.

*Acyuta:* The infallible Lord (Krishna), a name of the supreme personality of godhead, who can never fall from his position.

*Adhar:* Basis.

*Adhoksaja:* A name of the supreme personality of godhead, who is not perceivable by impure, material senses.

*Adhyatmika:* From being the personality in possession of his senses (*adhyatmika*) He is as well the controlling deity (*adhidaivika*) as the person separate therefrom perceived as another embodied living being (*adhibhhautika*). The individual person possessing different instruments of senses is called the *adhyatmic* person,

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and the individual controlling deity of the senses is called *adhidaivic.* The embodiment seen on the eyeballs is called the *adhibhautic* person.

*Adi sesha* (also *Sesha):* Divine serpent with a thousand heads upon which the earth rests; used by demigods and demons together to churn the ocean of milk. Also, reposing bed of Vishnu. Also, *Sesa-nâga* of *Ananta-sesa:* the snake-bed of *Garbhodakasâyi.*

*Adv(w)aita:* *Adwaita* is the awareness of the one in full measure, in all things, at all times. Without duality, which means with regard to the Lord that there is no difference between his body and himself.

*Adwaithananda:* The bliss of being one and only.

*Advaita Prabhu:* An incarnation of Lord Vishnu who is a principal associate of another incarnation, Lord Srî Caitanya Mahâprabhu.

*Agastya:* Sage visited by Rama, Sita and Lakshmana while in the Dandaka forest.

*Agneyastra:* A fire-arrow used by Rama to 'destroy' the darkness which was caused by the *rakshasas* Akampa and Athikaya through their magical skill.

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*Agni:* God of fire, the subtle divine *effulgence* and illumination which is the core of fire.

*Agni astra:* Fire weapon.

*Ahamkara:* Egoism.

*Ahethukadayasindhu:* The ocean of Mercy that saves without any reason or context.

*Ahi ravana:* Another son of Ravana living in the nether regions.

*Aja:* A name of the supreme personality of godhead, who is unborn.

*Ajâmila:* A fallen *Brâhmana* who was saved from hell by unintentionally chanting the Lord's name at the time of death.

*Aja-mukhi:* Demoness.

*Ajnana:* To speak of it (the one) as different is to reveal one's ignorance.

*Akhand Bhajan:* Singing the names of god continuously for 12 or 24 hours.

*Akas(h)a:* Ether, space, one of the five elements of nature. The sky or akasa is the fifth elemental force, characterised by sound; sound is the symbol for *Brahmam*, known as *Sabda Brahmam.*

*Akshauhini:* An *akshauhini* consists of 1,09,350 foot soldiers, 65,610 horses and horsemen, 21,870 elephants and elephant

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warriors, and 21,870 chariots and their human equipment.

*Akshara Parabrahma:* Imperishable absolute.

*Akshaya pathra:* A vessel, whose contents will remain undiminished however much they are used, given by Krishna to the Pandavas in exile.

*Âkûti:* One of Svâyambhuva Manu's three daughters and the wife of Ruci.

*Ambarisa Mahârâja:* A great devotee king who perfectly executed all nine devotional practices (hearing, chanting, etc.).

*Amrith:* Immortality, immortality-granting nectar, nectar, oily liquid with a sweet smell and flavour.

*Amrithodbhavam Day:* In the very first week of 1963, on the 6th of January to be exact, the *Vaikunta Ekadasi* had to be celebrated, according to the calendar. Baba's calendar marks out that day as *Amrithodbhavam Day,* when divine nectar emanates from his hand.

*Amsa:* Part. The Lord incarnates in countless ways; he comes as an Inner inspirer for some definite purpose: an *Amsa avathar* (see also *Kalaa* and *Yugavathar).*

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*Ananda:* Bliss. Perpetual state of supreme bliss.

*Ananga:* Limbless.

*Ananta:* The thousand-headed serpent incarnation of the Lord, who sustains the planets on his hoods.

*Anantho Vai Vedaah:* The *Vedas* are endless.

*Anasana:* The vow of "non-acceptance of food".

*Anasuya:* A consort of Sage Athri.

*Andame Anandam:* "Beauty is bliss."

*Anga:* Limb, part.

*Anga Mahârâja:* The father of King Vena.

*Angada:* Son of Vali.

*Angirâ:* One of the seven great sages who were born directly from Lord Brahmâ.

*Aniruddha:* Krishna's grandson, Lord Krishna's expansion; one of the four original expansions of Lord Krishna in the spiritual world.

*Anjaneya (Hanuman):* Monkey warrior who became Rama's devoted friend and servant, also called Son of the Wind-God Vayu.

*Annapoorna:* The Goddess of plenty, who confers food on all her children; *anna*, the food, which she gives. *Poorna*, to the full, is not only for the body; *anna* means 'intake,' through the mouth, the senses, the brain, the nerves. So, this Goddess will grant

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sustenance for the body, the mind and the spirit.

*Anrit:* Falsehood.

*Anrtham:* Falsehood.

*Antardhâna:* Vijitâsva, a son of King Prthu.

*Anusasithara:* He who lays down the law, the norms.

*Apara Vidya:* Secular sciences.

*Apsara:* Celestial women of the heavenly planets.

*"Apula bap tho, apula bap":* "Our father alone is our father."

*Aradh:* Worship.

*Arat(h)i:* A ceremony for greeting the Lord with chanting and offerings of food, lamps, fans, flowers and incense.

*Arci:* The wife of King Prthu.

*Ardhangi:* Half the body.

*Arjuna:* 'One who is pure and unsullied, white'. Son of queen Kuntî and king Pându. Friend and cousin of Krishna. One of the five Pândava brothers; Krishna became his chariot driver and spoke to him the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*. (see The *Bhagavad Gîtâ* of Order)

*Arishadvarga:* The pulls of lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and hate (*Dharma* V).

*Artha:* Welfare, prosperity; one of the four goals of human life together with *dharma, kama, moksha* (righteousness,

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endeavour and liberation) (LKV).

*Aryamâ:* The demigod in charge of *pitrloka*, the planet where qualified departed ancestors reside.

*Asana:* Seat; posture. In *hatha yoga*, *asana* refers to any of numerous poses prescribed to balance and tune up the subtle energies of the mind and body for meditation and to promote health and longevity. Examples are the shoulder-stand (*sarvangasana*, 'whole body pose') and the lotus pose (*padmasana*). Each *asana* possesses unique benefits, affecting the varied inner bodies and releasing energies in different parts of the nervous system. While the physical science of *hatha yoga* can dramatically influence health and general well-being, it is primarily a preparation for the deeper *yogas* and meditations.

*Ashtagrahakota:* Conjunction of eight planetary bodies.

*(Sathya Sai) Ashtottarashata Nama Ratnamala:* A chain of gems being the 108 names of Sathya Sai Baba.

*Asita:* An ancient authority on the *Vedas*.

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*Ashoka:* A tree bearing beautiful red flowers. Sita was held in a grove of *ashoka* trees by Ravana. The tree is considered sacred to Lord Shiva. Also the *Champaka* and *Kesara* trees.

*Asokavana:* Garden in Lanka where Sita was kept by Ravana.

*Âsutosa:* Shiva, a special incarnation who is in charge of the mode of ignorance and the destruction of the material manifestation.

*Asraya:* The final aspect dealt with in The *Puranas*. It means, the help, the support, the prop; one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*.

*Asrayam:* Refuge.

*Asrithas:* Dependents.

*Asthika:* Theist (DharmaV).

*Asuras:* Demons, evil-minded (literally not from Surya, the sun-god), somebody who goes against the rules, somebody of darkness.

*Asvatthâmâ:* The nefarious son of the great military teacher Dronâchârya who murdered the children of the Pândavas.

*Âsvina:* October-November

*Aswamedha (yajna):* Horse sacrifice.

A Vedic horse sacrifice. At the end of life or a period of government of a king, a horse

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with a plaque around his neck is sent out into the kingdom accompanied by an army. —Method to separate from wordly detachment and status.

*Aswinidevas:* Twin gods (they represent heaven and earth, sun and moon, also day and night; they are eternally young and beautiful and benefactors of mankind).

*Athakarma:* Traditional ceremonial rites which purify and clarify the intellect.

*Atikaya:* Minister of Ravana.

*Atma:* Inner reality. Soul, but also body, spirit, senses. End of the i-illusion; self-remembrance in unity with Krishna. *Atma:* The sun of suns, the effulgence of Effulgences; it is the Supreme light, the *Swayamjyothi*, the self-effulgen. *Atma:* Unconquerable, indestructible, unlimited, the existence-knowledge-bliss-wave of the ocean that is God.

*Atmaswaroop:* Embodiment of *atma.*

*Atma Hathya:* Self-destruction.

*Atmajnana:* Self-knowledge.

*Atri Muni:* A great sage among the demigods and the father of the incarnation Dattâtreya.

*Avarana:* The superimposition on the eternal of the temporary, on the

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rope of the snake, on the noon day desert of the gleaming lake, on the mother-of-pearl of silver, on the *Sarvam-Brahma Mayam* (*Brahmana* that is the real reality of the universe) of the multiform, multicoloured, distracting, changing world.

*Avasyam anubhokthavyam, krtham Karma subhaasubham:* Good or bad, whatever *karma* has been done, its consequences have to be willy-nilly suffered or enjoyed.

*Avatar(a):* The principle of or the descent of god on earth, the incarnation of the formless with form, for the uplift of beings—this is the basic fact that makes the *Bhagavatha* authentic; form incarnate. Special manifestation of god on earth. When he comes down assuming special form on special occasions for a specific purpose, he is known as *Avatara*.....so, we can assert that the saints, sages, ascetics and men both good and bad, are all *avataras* of the Vishnu entity. (See also *Kalaa*, *Amsa* and *Yugavathar*). It would appear as if you get more inspiration from one *avatar* than another. But, all

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are equally divine and mysterious. The manifestation is suited to the time, the task, the circumstance and the need; its form is in accordance with the purpose.

*Avidyamaya:* The maya named Avidya is very vicious; she causes boundless misery. Those drawn by it will sink into the depths of flux, the eternal tangle of joy and grief.

*Ayodhya:* Capital city of Kosala which was ruled by Dasaratha and later by Rama.

*Bâhuka:* The personified sins of King Vena.

*Bahumati:* *Prize* and many-mindedness.

*Bahya:* Outer show *bhava:* inner feeling.

*Bakasura:* Name of the giant crane, an ogre in disguise who threatened the herd and was killed by Krishna.

*Bala and Athi Bala (mantra):* Strength and super-strength.

*Balarâma:* (Power of joy) Krishna's first complete (partial-) aspect, acting as his older brother. Also called Baladeva and Râma. Is the protector and teacher of the devotees. He is also called Bhagavân. Lord Krishna's elder brother and first plenary

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expansion.

*Bali Mahârâja:* A king who became a great devotee by surrendering everything to Vâmanadeva, the Lord's dwarf-*Brâhmana* incarnation.

*Balvikas:* Spiritual education programme for children meaning awakening of the child.

*Banyan:* Tree considered sacred. To mark the spot where sacred pastimes took place we may find a banyan tree.

*Bapu and Amma:* Father (*bap*) and mother.

*Barhisat-Barhismân: Prâcînabarhi:* A king who, entangled in fruitive activities, received instructions about the importance of devotional service from Nârada Muni.

*Bhâdra:* August-September.

*Bhagavad Gîtâ:* The Song of the Lord.

*Bhagavallîlavathâra, Lîlâ-manusha-vigraha:* He (Baba) was indisputably divine.

*Bhagavatha:* Can be applied to every account of the experiences of those who have contacted god and the godly (*Bhagavan* and *Bhaktha*); is given to the descriptions of the experiences of those who have realised him in those forms and of those who have been blessed

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by his grace and chosen as his instruments; by *Bhagavatha* we also mean those with attachment to god, those who seek the companionship of god; only those who avoid them (the company of the ungodly) can be called *Bhagavathas*, God's own.

*Bhagavan:* (*Bhagavatha Vahini*) divinity; term of reverential address; Sathya Sai Baba is called *Bhagavan* by his devotees. *Bha* meant 'creation,' *Ga* meant 'protection' and *Va* meant 'change' or 'transformation.' Bhagavan is capable of all three.

*Bhagavathathatwa:* The wisdom of the divine.

*Bhajan:* Devotional singing, reciting one or more holy names of the Lord. Bhajan or reverential adoration must be a mental upsurge, not an oral exercise.

*Bhaktha(s):* (*Bhagavatha Vahini*) The ones drawn towards him. Faithful devotees of the Lord. A devotee of the Lord; one who performs devotional service (*bhakti*).

*Bhaktharakshana:* Guarding the good, fostering of *bhakthas*, granting succour to devotees.

*Bhakthi:* Reverent adoration, devotion. Adoring the supreme with the greatest possible Love is called *Bhakthi*, the path of devotion.

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*Bhaktidevî:* The personification of devotional service.

*Bhakthimarga:* Steadily worshipping the source and sustenance of all, him, the true, the good, the beautiful, the embodiment of love, peace and joy, in all, as all, for all, through all.

*Bhaktisiddhânta Sarasvatî Thâkura:* The spiritual master of His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupâda.

*Bhakti Yoga:* Linking with the supreme lord (Krishna) by devotional service. "Union through devotion." *Bhakti yoga* is the practice of devotional disciplines, worship, prayer, chanting and singing with the aim of awakening love in the heart and opening oneself to God's grace. *Bhakti* may be directed toward God, gods or one's spiritual preceptor. *Bhakti yoga* seeks communion and ever closer rapport with the divine, developing qualities that make communion possible such as love, selflessness and purity.

*Bhakthirvasah Purushah:* The Lord is won over by devotion alone.

*Bharadwaja:* Sage visited by Rama while in exile in the forests.

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*Bharath:* The syllable *Bha*, which he interpreted as light, the light of spiritual realisation, the light that reveals the identity of all as God.

*Bharatha:* 'He who rules', half-brother of Rama born from Kaikeyi (Kaika).

*Bharata (Jada):* The son of Mahârâja Dusyanta who renounced his kingdom and family at an early age. He became very advanced in spiritual practice, but later became attached to a pet deer and had to take two more births before achieving liberation.

*Bhâratî Sarasvatî:* The goddess of learning and the wife of Lord Brahmâ.

*Bharathakupa:* Bharatha's well.

*Bhargava:* Descendant of Bhrigu.

*Bhargavarama:* Descendant of Bhrigu, a saint in the Vedic primeval times.

*Bhartha:* Husband, one who is the overlord, the one who looks after. Who else can truly be called a husband than god? (Discourses)

*Bhasma:* *Vibhuthi* (ash).

*Bhava:* Inner feeling; *bahya:* outer show. Devotion and love for Krishna.

*'Bhavathi, Bhikshaam dehi':* 'Ma, give me alms.

*Bhiksha:* Alms.

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*Bhîsma:* The most powerful and oldest warrior in the battle of Kurukshetra; he is recognised as one of the chief authorities on devotional service to the Lord.

*Bhoomatha:* Land, that in return for seeds offers grain a hundredfold.

*Bhrama:* Delusion.

*Bhramara:* The bee which is attracted spontaneously by the honey of grace.

*Brihaspati:* The spiritual master of King Indra and chief priest of the heavenly planets.

*Bhrigu:* The leader of the sages in the universe.

*Bilvamangala Thâkura:* A great devotee who wrote books describing the confidential pastimes of Lord Krishna.

*Bodha:* Teaching.

*Boon:* A promise or reward.

*Brahmâ Brahmâjî Virinca:* The creator. Demi-god. There exist more Brahmâs. First living being sprouted from Vishnu's navel. Resides on the lotus which is the creation, i.e. Mount Meru. The first created living being and secondary creator of the material universe.

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*Brahmâ(n):* (Also called Hiranyagarbha: 'of the gold inside'—associated with creation), he is Brahmâ, with protection; he is Vishnu, with dissolution; he is Shiva. The creator in the trinity Brahmâ, Vishnu (the Preserver), and Shiva (the Destroyer). Impersonal supreme being, primal source and ultimate goal of all beings. Thus, it is identical to the *atma.*

*Brahmastra:* He resolved to resort to the sacred arrow of Brahma that he had with him. He knew that Brahma, the first of the trinity, had told Ravana that he would meet his death at the hands of man and monkey. He decided to prevent that calamity. The *Brahmastra* was released with appropriate ritual formulae. Hanuman had great reverence for the weapon that is sanctified by such *mantras* and dedicated to Brahma.

*Brahma-Atma-Buddhi:* The awareness that one is just *Brahman*, and nothing less (*Geetha Vahini*).

*Brahmacharya:* A celibate student under the guidance of a spiritual master; celibate student life; the first order of Vedic spiritual life.

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*Brahma Marga:* The principles of spiritual advancement.

*Brahma Muhurtha:* The hours from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. and from 3 a.m. to 6 p.m.

*Brahmachari, Brahmajnani* (see also *jnana*): Seekers of truth, pilgrims on the path of Brahma-realisation.

*Brahmajnana:* Sita is—or the awareness of the universal absolute.

*Brahmajnani:* It meant 'One who has acquired the wisdom that reveals the inner reality.'

*Brahmamuhurtham:* 4.30 a.m.

*Brâhmana:* A member of the intellectual, priestly class; the first Vedic social order.

*Brahmapriya:* Beloved of Brahma, said of Satharupa, the wife of Manu.

*Brahmins:* The virtuous.

*Buddha:* The special incarnation of the supreme personality of godhead who appeared to bewilder atheists and dissuade them from performing unnessary animal sacrifies.

*Buddhi:* Reason.

*Chaitanya:* ('Living force') name of the incarnation of Krishna as Krishna-*bhakta* in 1486 in Bengal. Also called Mahâprabhu Krishna-Caitanya and Gauranga. Express: Tsjétanja.

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*Chaitanya Mahâprabhu:* The incarnation of the Lord who descended to teach love of God through the *sankirtana* movement.

*Chaitanya caritâmrta:* The book of Krishnadâsa Kavirâja Goswâmî about the life and teachings of Lord Chaitanya. 'The New Testament' of the Chaitanya-vaisnava. *Chaitanya-caritâmrta.*

*Chaitanya vaishnava's:* School of devotees of Lord Vishnu, who follow Lord Caitanya.

*Châṇakya Pandita:* The Brâhmana advisor of king Chandragupta who was responsible for checking Alexander the Great's invasion of India.

*Chandra:* The presiding demigod of the moon.

*Chandrasekhara Âcârya:* A great householder devotee of Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu.

*Châṛvâka Muni:* The originator of hedonistic philosophy.

*Chakra:* Weapon (discus) of Krishna, also called *Sudarsana.*

*Chamatkar:* Miracle.

*Chandrayana:* Fasting period by crescent moon.

*Chawl:* Tenement.

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*Chintamani:* Wish fulfilling gem.

*Chitha shudhi:* Leads to *Jnana Sidhi,* that is, goodness leads to godliness.

*Chiththachor:* Name for Krishna, the stealer of hearts.

*Chitrakethu and Chitrangada:* The sons of Lakshmana.

*Creation (present) by Vedic Chronology:* Present creation exists within 1 day of Brahmâ, 1 day of Brahmâ is 1000 *divya* (divine) *yugas,* 1 *divya yuga* equals 4 million 320 thousand years 1,000 times 4,320,000 years equals 1 day of Brahmâ 1 day of Brahmâ equals 4 billion and 320 million years. There are 14 *manvantars* in one day of Brahmâ 14 divide 4,320,000,000 = 308,571,428 years per *manvanta.* Creation has already passed through 6 *manvantar* cycles 6 *manvantars* multiplied by 308,571,428 equals 1,851,428,568 years. Present creation is approximately 1 billion and 851 million years old.

*Crore(s):* (Hindi *karos*) in India and Pakistan, one hundred lakhs, or the sum of ten million: said specifically of rupees.

*Cupid (Kandarpa):* The demigod who incites lusty desires in the hearts of the conditioned living entities.

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*Dabari:* Tomb.

*Dabholkar:* Govinda Raghunatha Dabholkar: Author of the *Sai Sathcharitham*, the book about the life of Shirdi Sai Baba (nickname: Hemadpant).

*Dadhîci (Dhadheechi):* Great hero, who gave up his bones to Indra to form a thunderbolt for killing a demon leader.

*Daivam:* God.

*Daiva samaana:* Equal to god.

*Daivi Sampath:* Divine elevating impulses and motives.

*Daksa:* A son of Brahmâ who is a chief forefather of the population of the universe.

*Dâksâyanî:* A name of Satî.

*Dakshina:* Ritual fees.

*Damodara:* The one with a rope around his waist. Refers to Krishna when he was a young boy.

*Danda:* Stick, carried by sages for performing rites (together with a *kamandalu*).

*Dandaka:* Great forest which Rama, Sita and Lakshmana travelled through for ten years of their exile.

*Dandakaranya:* The ruler of this region, Danda by name, violated the chastity of the daughter of his own preceptor, Bhrigu. Brighu listened to the pathetic story as

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related by his daughter and, in the extremity of his anger, he overwhelmed the region with a downpour of dust. Therefore, this area was sodden deep with mud, and in course of time, it was a thick jungle from end to end. The region is named Dandakaranya, after that infamous ruler.

*Danava's:* The race of evil-minded ogres, subhuman monsters.

*Dars(h)an:* Seeing and experiencing a saint, blessing.

Dâsa, Dâsi: (Servant) Instrument of the will of God, Krishna.

*Dasaratha:* 'The-ten-chariot hero', name of the father of Rama, son of Aja and Indumathi, king of Kosala and Rama's earthly father.

*Datta:* Granted.

*Dattâtreya:* A partial incarnation of Lord Vishnu who appeared as the son of Atri Muni.

*Tapah, sauca, dayâ, sathya:* Austerity, cleanliness, compassion and truthfulness are the legs that established the age of truth (*Sathya Yuga*, the 'old days').

*Dayyam:* The devil.

*Deha-atma buddhi:* The false idea that one is just the body and nothing more (*Geetha Vahini*).

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*Dehamatha:* The mother who gave birth to its body.

*Dehi:* The embodied.

*Depavali:* The festival of lights, commemorating the victory of the uplifting faculties of man over his down dragging tendencies.

*Desa-Matha:* The region inhabited by the society it is born into that stamps on it its way of living, lines of thinking and ideals and goals.

*Deva:* God. Demigod; great personality in devotion to Krishna, self-realised to administrative independence. 'Shining one.' A being living in the higher astral plane, in a subtle, nonphysical body. *Deva* is also used in the scripture to mean 'God or Deity'.

*Deva and Asura:* Divine and demoniac, gods and demons.

*Devahûti:* The mother of the Lord's incarnation Kapila.

*Devakî:* The mother of Lord Krishna.

*Devakî-nandana:* A name of the supreme personality of godhead, the darling son of Devakî.

*Devala:* An ancient authority on the *Vedas*.

*Dhanam:* Riche's money.

*Dhara:* Continuous stream of *aradh* (worship).

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*Dharma:* Religious principles; one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e. devotional service to the Lord) (*Sastras*) (*Bhagavatha Vahini*), Righteous conduct, justice, morality, duty. *Karma* along the lines of *Dharma* cannot be sinful; justice, righteousness, morality, virtue, one of the four goals of human life together with *artha, kama, moksha* (welfare, endeavour and liberation), rightful duties, *Dharma Vahini.* The regulated life of the spirit affecting every detail of the process of living, with liberation from the consequences of ignorance always in view.

*Dharmakshethra:* See Kurukshetra.

*Dharma Sikshana:* Learning *dharma* (*Dharma Vahini*).

*Dharma Marga:* The principles of right social behaviour.

*Dharma Narayana:* The personification of *dharma* (*Dharma Vahini*).

*Dharmaraja:* Another name for Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, meaning: king of righteousness or the righteous.

*Dharma rakshana:* The guardianship of righteousness.

*Dharma sthapana:* Restoration or revival of *dharma*, justice, the revival and

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re-establishment of the moral order in human affairs.

*Dharmavratha:* A strict adherent of the vow to be righteous in word, thought and deed.

*Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah:* *Dharma* saves those who save it. *Satya annasti paradharmah:* there is no *dharma* higher than truth.

*Dhenuvratha:* Ritualistic vow of 'cow worship'.

*Dhoti:* Long piece of cloth worn around the waist. Standard clothing worn by male temple-devotees.

*Dhrtarâstra:* The uncle of the Pândavas whose attempt to usurp their kingdom for the sake of his own sons resulted in the Kurukshetra war.

*Dhruva (Maharaja):* Grandson of Brahma and son of Uttanapada; as a child, at the age of five, he performed severe penance and attained self-renunciation.

*Dhuni:* Fire-place.

*Dhyana(m):* (*Bhagavatha Vahini*) Meditation, equanimity.

*Dikku lenivanikki Devude Gathi:* For him who has no refuge, god is the refuge.

*Dilipa:* King.

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*Diti:* The wife of Kasyapa Muni and mother of the demons Hiranyâksa and Hiranyakasipu.

*Divya:* Divine.

*Divyatma:* The universal absolute entity.

*"Divyatma Swarupulara":* 'Ye, divine atmic realities'.

*Dronâcârya:* The military teacher of the Pândavas who was obliged to fight against them in the battle of Kurukshetra.

*Drsya:* It is 'absolute non-dualist' philosophy when the seen (*Drsya*) world is superimposed on the undivided, indivisible *Brahman*.

*Durgâ:* The personified material energy and wife of Lord Shiva.

*Durvâsâ Muni:* A powerful mystic yogî, famous for his fearful curses.

*Duryodhana:* Kaurava, nephew of Arjuna, who lead the hostile armies together with his other 99 brothers, the sons of the blind uncle Dhritarâstra.

*Dushana:* Demon chieftain, brother of Khara and Surpanakha.

*Dvaipâyana Vyâsadeva:* The original compiler of the *Vedas* and *Purânas* and author of the *Vedânta sûtra* and *Mahâbhârata*.

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*Dvârakâdhîsa:* A name of the supreme personality of godhead, the Lord of the city Dvârakâ.

*Dvîpa:* 'Separate area, island or continent'. There are seven *dvîpas*. Also, Brahmâ's lotus, the galaxy, is described as a *dvîpa*. The Eurasian continent is known as Jambhûdvîpa.

*Dwapara Age (Yuga):* The *yuga* in which Krishna was on earth.

*Dwaraka:* Was applied to the city built by Krishna on an island, because the word means a place the doors of which are open for the four castes and for the four types of men, namely *Aartha, Artharthi, Jijnasu* and *Jnani*, so that they may attain the four *Purusharthas*.

*Ekadasi:* The day of fasting at the eleventh day after the new and the full moon. To the 'stage of no *kuntitha* or dullness or stupidity, mutilation or misery: on *Ekadasi Day*, dedicated to the winning of that stage, the gates of Vaikunta are open for those who have achieved success in the struggle for overcoming the handicap of ignorance.'

*Ekam eva adwithiyam Brahma:* One only, without a second, is Brahma.

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*Ekoham Bahusyam:* 'I am One, let me become many.'

*Gandhârî:* The faithful wife of king Dhritarâstra and mother of 100 sons.

*Gandharva's:* Heavenly angels; the singers under the demigods.

*Ganesa:* The demigod in charge of material opulence and freedom from misfortune.

*Ganga or Ganges:* The river considered sacred by the Hindus.

*Garbhodakasâyî Vishnu:* The expansion of the Lord who enters into each universe.

*Garuda:* King of winged creatures. The great eagle who is the eternal carrier of Lord Vishnu.

*Gauranga:* Name of Lord Chaitanya, which refers to his 'golden' colour (*gaur*).

*Gaurakisora dâsa Bâbâjî:* The spiritual master of Srîla Bhaktisiddhânta Sarasvatî Thâkura.

*Gaurasundara:* Another name for Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu.

*Gayatri:* (see also *Srîmad Bhâgavatam*) Ancient Vedic prayer to awaken the intelligence and lead to enlightenment: *'Aum Bhur Bhuva Svaha; Tat Savitur Varenyam; Bhargo Devasya*

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*Dhimahi; Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat' (The original form of the body, the life force and the supreme abode; that source of life most excellent, that divine luster we meditate—may this light illumine our intellect.)*

*Girisa Gopîsvara Shiva:* A special incarnation who is in charge of the mode of ignorance and the destruction of the material manifestation.

*Godavari:* The river, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana cross to get to Panchavati.

*Gokula:* Cow village.

*Gomatha:* The cow that gives its milk and the bullock that is the partner in growing its food throughout life.

*Gopala:* Krishna as cowherd lad, Gopala is Lokapala, and not a cowherd boy, *go* means cow, *pala* means he who fosters and protects, *loka* means the world.

*Gopâla Bhatta Gosvâmî:* One of the six Vaishnava spiritual masters who directly followed Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu and systematically presented his teachings.

*Gopas, Gopis:* The herdsmen and maids.

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*Gothra:* Family, race, lineage.

*Govinda:* (Friend of cows) Name of Lord Krishna, which means 'He, who bestows joy to the land, cows and the senses' (also Gopala: Krishna as cowherd). He as the blessing of the cows.

*Govinda dâsa Thâkura:* Author of important Vaishnava songs.

*Grama Seva Mantap:* Home for village reconstruction.

*Grihastha:* Married status.

*Griva:* Head.

*Gunas:* *Satwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, three characteristics determine human behaviour: *satwic*, *rajasic*, *tamasic* types of behaviour, groups of qualities, bundles of attributes.

*Gunathitha:* Above and beyond all obligations and attributes.

*Guru:* Teacher, preceptor.

*Guru Dakshina:* Ceremonial presents made to the preceptor by the pupil.

*Guru Poornima:* The full moon dedicated to the worship of one's spiritual preceptor.

*Hamsa:* Celestial swan.

*Haldi:* Turmeric powder, considered auspicious.

*Hanuman (Anjaneya):* Monkey warrior who became Rama's devoted friend and servant, also called 'Son of the Wind-God Vayu'.

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*Harâ Râdhârânî:* The eternal consort and spiritual potency of Lord Krishna.

*Hare:* The energy of, the love of (the Lord).

*Hari:* The Lord as the boatman for the ocean of *samsar* with the body as the boat, the Lord, Krishna, Vishnu, whose avatar Rama was.

*Haridâsa Thâkura:* A great devotee and associate of Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu who chanted 300,000 names of god a day.

*Haryaksa Hiranyâksa:* The demoniac son of Kasyapa who was killed by Lord Varâha.

*Hasta Mudhras:* Hand gestures.

*Haya:* Horse.

*Haya griva:* Horse head.The Lord took form as *yajna*, in a *Brahma-yajna*, above the neck. He had the form of a Horse, He was called haya (horse) *griva* (head). *Hayagrîva*: Lord Krishna 's horse-headed incarnation, who returned the stolen *Vedas* to Brahmâ.

*Himavaan:* The deity of the Himalayas.

*Hiranyakasipu:* A demoniac person who forbade mention of Vishnu's name, wicked father of Prahlâdha; killed by man-lion Narsimhadeva, avatar of Vishnu.

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*Hiranyâksa:* Brother of Hiranyakasipu, both sons of Kasyapa and Diti. Wicked brother of Hiranyakasipu; killed by the wild boar Varaha, *avatar* of Vishnu.

*Homa(patala):* Fire offering. A sacred ceremony in which the Gods are offered oblations through the medium of fire in a sanctified fire pit.

*Hrishîkesha:* Krishna, name of the supreme personality of godhead, the supreme master of everyone's senses.

*Hrudaya vasi:* The indweller.

*Iksvâku:* The son of the Sun-God and the first king of the planet earth.

*Indra:* Lord of demigods and king of heavenly planets.

*Indriyas (ten):* Five senses of perception and five senses of action.

*Isanukatha:* The glories of *Isa* or god and the manifold ways in which men have experienced the might and majesty, the sweetness and light, that the glory represents; one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*.

*Iswara:* Lord.

*Iswara amba, Easwaramma:* Baba's mother (the chosen mother) *Iswara amba*.

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*Jada Bharata:* Bharata Mahârâja in his final birth.

*Jai, Jai:* An acclamation of happiness.

*Jagâi and Mâdhâi:* Two great debauchees whom Lord Nityânanda converted into Vaishnavas.

*Jagannâtha:* 'Lord of the Universe'. A deity of Krishna worshiped all over India for thousands of years, especially in the province of Orissa, where there is a great temple of Lord Jagannâtha at Puri. His brother is Balarâma and His sister is Subhadrâ. Each year at Purî, during the gigantic Ratha-yâtrâ festival, millions of pilgrims from all over India come to worship Lord Jagannathâ, Balarâma and Subhadrâ, as the deities ride in procession on three huge carts. Lord Chaitanya, who spent the last 18 years of his life at Jagannathâ Purî, used to dance and chant in ecstasy before the deity of Lord Jagannathâ during the yearly Ratha-yâtrâ festival.

*Jagath:* Universe.

*Jambuvan(tha):* Leader of the bears.

*Janaka:* Emperor of Mithila, father of Sita.

*Janakî:* Sita, daughter of king Janaka, emperor of Mithila.

*Janan:* Balsem.

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*Janârdana:* Krishna as the maintainer of all living beings and the three worlds.

*Japa(m):* *Mantra* meditation, repeating god's names.

*Japamala:* Rosary. Praying cord with 108 beads plus one, for chanting of the lord's names, material: tulsi or neem.

*Jatayu:* Old eagle chief. He was a great friend of *Dasharatha* (Rama's earthly father) accompanying him on his spatial expeditions to help the denizens of heaven. The great bird who tried to rescue Sita and was killed by Ravana.

*Jatha karma:* Rite of first cleansing (birth ceremony).

*Jaya and Vijaya:* Two door-keepers of Vaikuntha who were cursed on account of offending the four Kumâra Rishis, and who thus both had to take birth three times in the material world as great demons.

*Jayadeva Gosvâmî:* A great Vaishnava poet and author of *Gîta Govinda.*

*Jayantha:* A son of Indra.

*Jîva Gosvâmî:* One of the six Vaishnava spiritual masters who directly followed Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu and systematically presented His teachings.

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*Jivi(a), Deva, Prakrthi:* The individual absolute (soul), god, nature.

*Jnana:* Spiritual knowledge, wisdom. '*Jnana* alone can confer liberation; *karma* and *bhakthi* are preliminary stages that each seeker has to go through. *Jnana* alone reveals the essential oneness of the universe, the oneness of matter and of time and space, of the most distant star with the smallest speck glittering in the sunlight'; the path of discrimination and elimination of illusion.

*Kaivalyam:* The supreme importance of holy acts prescribed in the *Vedas* and *Sastras*.

*Jnanam Maheswaraad ichcheth:* Desire from Maheswara, the gift of *Jnana*.

*Jnanamarga:* Reveals the *atma* as all-pervading, all-inclusive, all-sustaining. When the illumination of *Jnana* is gained, the reality is experienced and man is free. He merges with the truth from which be broke off aeons ago, on a long and arduous adventure into the dark night of individuality.

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*Jnana Yoga:* *Yoga* of knowledge, Union of knowledge. Describes the esoteric spiritual practices of the fully enlightened being, or *jnani*.

*Jnani:* The truly wise.

*Kabandha:* He was a monster, with no head; his arms were inordinately long; he had his mouth in the centre of his stomach.

*Kaika:* Third wife of *Dasharatha* who gave birth to Bharatha, half-brother of Rama (see also Kaikeyi).

*Kaila:* Plantain tree considered sacred to a form of Kali. It is often used as decoration during festivals and marriages.

*Kaikeyi:* Rama's stepmother (see also Kaika), daughter of the ruler of the Kekaya kingdom. Dasharatha's youngest queen and the mother of Bharatha. She called for Rama's exile.

*Kaitabha:* Born from ear-wax of Vishnu; brother of Madhu.

*Kaivalya:* Beautitude, liberation.

*Kafni:* The robe of Shirdi Sai.

*Kalaa:* Fragment. The Lord incarnates in countless ways; he comes as an incarnation of a fragment of his; a *kalaa* (see also *amsa* and *yugavathar*).

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*Kala:* Time.

*Kali:* The Kali spirit of the age of wickedness. Kali or wickedness can have sway only through: (i) the incompetence of the ruler, (ii) the loss of self-reliance among the people, and (iii) the decline in the earning of grace, the spirit of the age of wickedness.

*Kâlî Durgâ:* The personified material energy and wife of Lord Shiva.

Kaliya: Name of the huge serpent Krishna fought with and at the end blessed by Krishna.

*Kalki:* Lord Krishna's incarnation, at the end of the last of the four ages, who annihilates all the remaining atheists.

*Kalpa:* Age. A day according to the time-calculation of Brahmâ.

*Kalpatharu:* Wish fulfilling tree.

*Kama:* Endeavour, moral desire; one of the four goals of human life together with *dharma, artha, moksha* (righteousness, welfare and liberation), (*Leela Kaivalya Vahini*).

*Kamala:* Tree sacred to Lakshmi.

*Kamandalu:* Waterpot, a waterpot usually carried by sages for performing rites.

*Kamsa:* A demoniac king of the Bhoja dynasty and maternal uncle of Krishna.

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*Kamyakarma:* Acts done with intent to gain the fruits thereof (*Dharma Vahini*).

*Kaanda (Kanda):* The three sections of the *Vedas: Karma, Upasana* and *Jnana*: 'The first one deals with *Karma*, which is the most voluminous and the second, shorter in size, is called *Upasana* or worship. The third or the *Jnana* section is the *Upanishad* literature, which is shorter still, the *Vedantha* or the consummation of Vedic discipline'. *Kanda* means water, an expanse of water.

*Kantane, Ventane, Jantane and Intane:* I am with you, before your eyes, behind your back, by your side, in your home.

*Kapila:* The incarnation of the Lord who expounded *sânkhya yoga*, the analysis of matter and spirit, as a means of cultivating devotional service to the Lord.

*Kâranodakasâyî Vishnu:* The expansion of the Lord from whom all material universes emanate.

*Karatâla's:* Little (hand) bells, also called kartels, used during *kîrtana*.

*Kardama Muni:* The father of Lord Kapila.

*Karma:* Activity. The deeds, words and thoughts of the persons themselves. Material activities,

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for which one incurs subsequent reactions.

*Karma Marga:* The principle of right action; the observance of selfless activity dedicated to high purpose, and with no tinge of pride or pomp or sense of ownership so far as the fruits of that activity are concerned.

*Karma Yoga:* Attached to God through unselfish actions, characteristic of bhakti. The path of God realisation through dedicating the fruits of one's work to God.

*"Karmanyai vahi samsiddhi":* Cultivating devotion to God is the best method of using the week.

*Kârttikeya:* The younger son of Lord Shiva and Pârvatî; the presiding deity of warfare.

*Karuna:* Tenderness, pity, compassion.

*Karunarasa:* The expression of the emotion of tenderness, pity and compassion.

*Kasi:* The Holy City on the sacred Ganga, where Sandepini lived, Preceptor (Guru-teacher) of Balarama and Krishna, a pundit from Avanthi.

*Kashyapa:* A great saintly person who was the father of many demigods, including Lord Vâmanadeva,

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the Lord's dwarf *Brâhmana* incarnation.

*Katha Upanishad:* One of most popular *Upanishads* because of its clarity and brevity in expressing mystic truths; contains famous dialogue between Nachikethas and Yama(râja), God of death.

*Kâtyâyanî Durgâ:* The personified material energy and wife of Lord Shiva.

*Kaumodakî:* Name of the club of the supreme lord.

*Kauravas:* The descendants of Kuru who fought against the Pândavas in the battle of Kurukshetra.

*Kaushalya:* First wife of Dasharatha who gave birth to Lord Rama.

*Kaustubha:* Name of a brilliant jewel Lord Krishna wears around his neck.

*Kavi:* Poet.

*Kavimkaveenaam:* The poet of poets.

*Kesava:* Name of Krishna: 'He with full, soft, long hair', or sometimes also: 'The conqueror of the demon Kesi', who threatened Gokula as a mad horse.

*Kesî:* A demon who attacked the inhabitants of Vrindâvana in the form of a wild horse, but was killed by Lord Krishna.

*Khara:* Demon chieftain, brother of Surpanakha.

*Kharjur:* Dates *(Sai Discourses)*.

*Kîrtana:* Singing (together) aloud the names of God.

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*Kishkindha:* The monkey kingdom ruled by Sugriva.

*Kodanda:* The name of Rama's bow.

*Kondamaraju:* Baba's grandfather.

*Kosala:* The kingdom ruled by Dasharatha.

*Kratu:* One of the seven great sages who were born directly from Lord Brahmâ.

*Kripa:* Mercy.

*Kripavrishti:* The shower of grace.

*Krishna (Krsna):* He who attracts everyone; cowherd, supreme commander, lover, Vedic monarch, Vishnu *avatar*, the supreme personality of godhead. Literally: Dark, because of his dark blue-grey coloured skin. Also called Hrsikesha, as master of the senses. Govinda and Gopala as the protector of the cows. Vâsudeva as the son of Vasudeva. Yogishvâra: Lord of the Yoga; Hari: Lord.

*Krishna Chaitanya:* Another name for Lord Chaitanya Mahâprabhu.

*Krishna Janmashtami (or Krishna Jayanti):* Celebration of the birthday of (Janmashtami) Krishna (August-September)

*Krsnadâsa Kavirâja:* A great Vaishnava spiritual master who recorded the

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biography and teachings of Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu in the *Chaitanya caritâmrta*.

*Krosa:* Cry of hunger.

*Ksattâ:* A name of Vidura.

*Kshatriya:* A warrior or administrator; the second Vedic social order.

*Kshera sagara:* The pure ocean of milk, whereon the Lord reclines on the serpent-couch.

*Kshetra:* Region (*kshetra* of *dharma*: region of righteousness) (Dharmakshetra).

*Ksîrodakasâyî Vishnu:* The expansion of the Lord who enters the heart of every created being as the supersoul.

*Kubera:* God of riches. His father was Vishravas and younger half-brother was Ravana.

*Kulasekhara:* A great devotee-king and author of *Mukunda-mâlâ-stotra*, prayers to Lord Krishna.

*Kumâras:* Four learned ascetic sons of Lord Brahmâ appearing eternally as children.

*Kumbhakarna:* A brother of Ravana, who fought against Rama and attained liberation. Next were the two demons as Râvana and Kumbhakarna born from Kesinî as the sons of Visravâ and brought misery upon all the people. To relieve them from the curse manifested

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thereupon Râmachandra himself to kill them, but you better hear about the exploits of Râma from the lips of Mârkandeya, my best.

*Kumbha melâ:* The greatest congregation of human beings on earth. Every 12 years in Allahabad, *sâdhus* and pilgrims from all over India gather at the Trivenî, the confluence of the three holy rivers Ganges, Yamunâ, and Sarasvatî. At an auspicious time that assures the worshiper liberation from the cycle of birth and death one enters the sacred waters.

*Kuntî:* The mother of the Pândavas; an aunt of Lord Krishna.

*Kûrma:* Lord Krishna's tortoise incarnation.

*Kuru:* The founder of the dynasty in which the Pândavas, as well as their arch rivals, the sons of *Dhrtarâstra,* took birth.

*Kurukshetra:* Baba said that the name Dharmakshethra was used for the battlefield, wherein the *Gita* was taught. Though its real name was 'Kurukshethra', it was referred to as Dharmakshethra in the *Gita,* for, it was the field where *dharma* won over *adharma,*

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where right prevailed over wrong. Indeed, the body of man is the genuine Dharmakshethra, the battlefield where Right fights with wrong for victory. *Ksha* means that which suffers *kshaya*, or decay through vice; *thra* means that which recovers by means of virtue. So, the body which flourishes and perishes through virtue and vice is the *kshethra*; it has to be made into a Dharma-kshethra, by the discovery of the dweller within the body, the *kshethra-jna*, the *atma*, the Antharyamin.

*Kurukshetra:* A holy pilgrimage place going back to the oldest Vedic times; close to present New Delhi in India. Place where the war described in the *Mahâbhârata*, took place and where Krishna spoke His *Gîtâ* to Arjuna. Kurukshetra: 'Field of labour'.

*Kusa and Lava:* Twin sons of Rama and Sita.

*Kusha grass:* Grass that is considered sacred. Sages often sit on *Kusha* grass mats when they do their meditation.

*Kuteeram:* Spiritual retreat.

*Kuvera:* The treasurer of the demigods.

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*Lakh:* (Hindi): One hundred thousand. Forty lakhs of warriors.

*Lakshana:* Aspect dealing with *nirodha*, or absorption; one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*.

*Lakshmana:* He who takes delight in the service of god and his consort. Lakshmana, half-brother of Rama, together with Shatrughna born from Sumitra.

*Laksmî:* Goddess of happiness; the eternal companion of the Lord in his Nârâyana-appearance, remaining in the Vaikuntha-worlds.

*Lanka:* Island kingdom ruled by Ravana.

*Lavana:* Terrible demon child of Kumbhinasa and Madhu; he was given a trident by Shiva for penance; killed by Shatrughna with the help of Rama.

*Lavapura (modern Lahore):* The capital city of Lava.

*Leela(s) (Lilas):* He plays on the stage that has no boundaries, his movements and activities, divine activities; so shaped that they suit the time, the person, the aspiration and the compassion which cause each shower of grace. The sport and pastimes, the adventures of the Lord.

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*Linga(m):* Oval form, mostly made from stone, metal or gold. It is a symbol of creation and of god, who is without beginning or end. Baba creates *lingams* inside his body, coming out of his mouth, mostly at *Mahasivarathri*, a holy day dedicated to the worship of Shiva. The *linga* is a 'mark' or 'symbol' representing the merging of the Particular in the Universal, the dissolution of the mind (with its agitations, aspirations and accomplishments that attach and adhere) in the *atma*-awareness. The wise realise that the mind and the vast phantasmagoria that it weaves are all subsumed in the *linga*, in the without beginning, endless ocean of existence-knowledge-bliss. *Lingam* means that in which all things merge and out of which all things emerge.

*Lingodbhava muhurtha:* The auspicious moment for the exterior manifestation of the symbol of the all-pervasive divine principle.

*Loka:* Planet, star, place of residence, living environment.

*Lokamatha:* The Mother of all beings.

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*Lokapala:* *Loka* means the world, *pala* means he who fosters and protects.

*Loka Samasthah Sukhino Bhavanthu:* May all the Worlds be happy.

*Lotus:* Flower; Hindu symbol of beauty, purity and good fortune.

*Mânasa Putra:* Nârada Muni, 'mental son' of Brahma.

*Madana Mohana:* Krishna as the personification of captivating charm.

*Madhava:* God, the lord of the universe, God, the lord of Laksmi, another name for Krishna.

*Madhavathwa:* Divinity.

*Madhu:* One of the demons born from the ear-wax of Vishnu; brother of Kaitabha and father of Lavana.

*Mâgha:* January-February.

*Mahâbhârata:* Epic of the battle of the aristocrats in the Vedic culture during the pastimes of Krishna, out of which the *Gîtâ* has been taken.

*Mahakali:* The facet of power as anger, vengeance adventure, audacity, the 7 nature.

*Mahalakshmi:* The facet of power as wealth, authority, imperium, prosperity, the *rajasic* nature.

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*Mahaprasthanam:* The big journey; religious mendicancy, (*Bhagavatha Vahini*).

*Mahâprabhu:* Great master, name of Lord Chaitanya.

*Maharatha:* A warrior capable of contending with 10,000 other warriors.

*Mahasaraswathi:* Power as self-control, vision, value, validity, knowledge, keenness, discipline, justice, aspiration, adoration, the *satwic* nature.

*Mahasivarathri:* A holy day dedicated to the worship of Shiva. The *linga* is a 'mark' or 'symbol' representing the merging of the particular in the universal, the dissolution of the mind (with its agitations, aspirations and accomplishments that attach and adhere) in the *atma*-awareness. The wise realise that the mind and the vast phantasmagoria that it weaves are all subsumed in the *linga*, in the beginningless endless ocean of existence-knowledge-bliss.

*Mahavira:* A name for Prince Vardhamana, the founder of Jainism, which means great hero. He is also called Jina and Siddha Buddha.

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*Mahâyuga:* Period of the four *yugas*, called *Satya, Tretâ, Dvâpara, Kali*, together lasting 4.32 million years or 1/1000 day of Brahmâ.

*Maheswara:* A name for Vishnu and Shiva, which means supreme god.

*Mahima's:* Miracles, glories (of Baba); an expression, a manifestation of divine glory.

*Makaradhwaja:* The guard in monkey form of the city of Ahi-ravana in *patala* at the nether regions.

*Makara Sankranthi:* The day of the Tropic of Capricorn, when the divine half of the year begins, with the northward movement of the sun in the northern hemisphere.

*Mala:* Contamination, *mala* is the dirt of vice, wickedness and looseness.

*Mallika:* Jasmine flowers.

*Mallikarjuna:* Arjuna means white, pure, without blemish; *mallika* means the spotlessly white jasmine flower. So, Mallikarjuna is Shiva of the snowy peak Kailasha; pure, cool, resplendent with the sacred ash spread all over.

*Malyavantha:* An old and revered minister of Ravana.

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*Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh:* The mind which welcomes the delusion or which entertains the idea of the reality is therefore the instrument, for both bondage and liberation (statement of the sruthi).

*Manana:* Meditation on the inner meaning.

*Manas(a):* The spirit or the thinking, which can be liberated through a *mantra*.

*Manasa sanchara:* Mental trip.

*Manasa sarovaram:* The lake of your inner consciousness, the lake of your mind.

*Mandavi:* Wife of Bharatha, daughter of Kusadhwaja (brother of Maharaja Janaka).

Mandodari: Name of the queen of king Ravana (mother of Meghanada), ruler of Lanka.

*Mangala Day:* The day (a Tuesday) when Hanuman brought the good news to Sita of Rama's victory over Ravana; the day that brought mangala or auspiciousness and joy. A day to be held sacred, more than the other days of the week, to adore Hanuman specially on this day, the bringer of the good news.

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*Mangalyam:* Married status; Draupadi prayed for it when Durvasa visited her with his disciples.

*Manmatha:* God of love.

*Manovaak kaaya:* Recitation of the name of god with full vigilance of thought, feeling and utterance.

*Mantap:* A commemorative structure.

*Mathanga (Rishi):* He predicted the arrival of Rama in the forest to Sabari, sage, it is he who cursed Vali.

*Manthara:* Maid servant who convinced Kaikeyi to have Rama exiled and make Bharatha king.

*Mantra:* Mystic formulae; chanting the holy names of god.

*Manu:* One body was transformed into two and therefore, where there was one will formerly, two appeared, one which attracted and the other which was drawn towards creation, the feminine and the masculine. Since the one attracted in a 100 distinct ways it was called Satharupa (hundred-faceted) and *beloved* of Brahma (Brahmapriya). The other was named Manu.

*Manvantharas:* The eras of Manu, the chronology of Manu, the story of Manu and their lineage; one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*.

*Markandeya:* The story of Markandeya, who defied death and won immortality as a star in space.

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*Maruthas:* Wind gods.

*Mathr devo bhava:* Treat the mother as god.

*Mathr devo bhava*
*Pithr devo bhava:* 'Let the mother be your God' and 'Let the father be your God'.

*Mathura:* The city where Krishna killed Kamsa, his original city of residence after Vrindâvana.

*Maya:* The tangle of ignorance, the veil of illusion, power to delude, delusion, the deluding urge, the mother of all the worlds, taking the appearance as real.

*Me Anandame*
*Na Aharam:* 'Your Ananda is what sustains Me'.

*Meghanada:* A general of Ravana, endowed with the power of adopting any form he liked.

*Meru:* The central, transcendental, mountain, the highest mountain where Lord Brahmâ resides. It lies in *Ilavrta varsa*, the central area. Must be conceived holistically as the centre of the spiritual and material world; thus, both as galactically as the centre of the Milky Way, and spiritually as the highest goal attainable in contemplation and transcendence.

*Mithila:* Kingdom of Emperor Janaka, father of Sita.

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*Mithya:* So too, the world is a dream, unreal, illusory. It is mithya.

*Moha:* Delusion caused by false identification, infatuation.

*Mohana:* Charming, ecstacy; another name for Rama and Krishna.

*Moksha:* Ultimate release , liberation from the cycle of birth and death, liberation; one of the four goals of human life together with *dharma, artha, kama* (righteousness, welfare and endeavour).

*Mrdanga:* A drum made of clay or synthetic material, playable on two sides, used often during *kîrtana.*

*(Hasta) Mudras:* Hand gestures.
Seven *mudhras* of Sathya Sai Baba:

1. First is the *Abhaya Mudra.* It is the gesture of the raised right hand allaying fear and assuring protection to the devotees.
2. Second is the *Varadha Mudra.* It is the downward pointed right palm bestowing gifts and boons to the devotees.
3. Third is the *Anugraha Mudra.* It is the gesture of raising both hands indicating blessings for the progress and welfare of the mass of devotees. It may also be

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called *Yoga Kshema Mudhra*.

4. Fourth is the *Srujana Mudra*. It is the gesture of the circular waving of the right palm pointed downwards for materialising spiritually charged articles (e.g. sacred ash).

5. Fifth is the *Thirodhana Mudra*. It is the gesture of circling the right palm in an outward direction driving away impurities or negativity in the surroundings. Alternatively, it may imply the dematerialisation of articles created.

6. Sixth is the *Shakthipatha Mudra*. It is the gesture of placing the right palm on top of the head of a devotee for the descent or activation of his spiritual energy.

7. Seventh is the *Tharjani Mudra*. It is the gesture of writing in the air with the index finger, or holding up the hand with fingers extended. This may indicate communication with extraterrestrial forces. The significance of these *mudras* is that they are for the welfare of the devotees. The descent of an *avatar* is always for the enhancement of the spiritual life

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of people and for the promotion of the practice of *dharma* (right conduct).

*Muhurtha:* A period of a few minutes (about an hour, edit).

*Mukthi:* It means the liberation of man, from the bonds of ignorance, *ajnana,* which keep him encased; one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas,* freedom from bondage .

*Mukunda:* The lord of liberation.

*Mukuta:* Crown.

*Muni:* Ascetic.

*Munikumar:* The son of an ascetic.

*Muralidhar:* Idol of Krishna with his flute (*murali*).

*Naaka:* Heaven is also known as *naaka* in Sanskrit; it has also another meaning, 'Nose'!

*Nachikethas:* Son of sage Vajashravas given to Yama, the lord of death, for questioning his father's mean gift of old and useless cows to pious people (see *Katha Upanishad*).

*Naga:* 'Serpent,' often the cobra; symbol of the *kundalini* coiled on the four petals of the *muladhara chakra. Naga*: The best or most excellent of any kind.

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*Nagara Sankirtan:* Gather together in the hours before dawn and walk slowly along the streets, singing *bhajans* glorifying God. Carry the Name to every doorstep. Wake up the sleeping. Purify the air polluted by day-long angry shouts of hate and greed, faction and fear. What greater service can you render than this—beginning the day with the name of god and helping others to remember Him?

*Nala and Nila (Ṇela):* Two generals of Rama (cursed by a sage: 'Boys! May all things that you throw on water never sink; may they float instead') helping in constructing the bridge to reach Lanka, the city of Ravana where Sita was kept.

*Namakarana:* Traditional ceremonial rites which purify and clarify the intellect.

*Namakaranam:* Rite of naming of a newborn.

*Namaste, Namaskar:* I bow (in devotion) for you; I greet you.

*Namasmarana:* The remembering of the name of god.

*Nanak:* Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism.

*Nandigrama:* Place where Bharatha stayed in contemplation while Rama spent 14 years in the forest.

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*Nannayya Bhatta:* Nickname of M Kasturi, author of *Sathyam Shivam Sundaram.*

*Nârâ and Nârâyana:* The inseparable divine forces.

*Nara-Nârâyana:* The original man (*Srimad Bhagavatam,* Canto 2, Chapter 7, Verse 6).

*Nârâyana:* Path of men, god of men, all men remain in him.

*Nârada Muni:* A great devotee of the lord, who can travel everywhere in the spiritual and material world to proclaim the glory of the lord (is also seen as an avatâra).

*Naraka:* Hell.

*Naram:* Water.

*Narantaka:* Another son of Ravana.

*Narasimha (Nrsmhadeva):* Man-lion. One of the ten *avatars* of Vishnu.

*Nrsmhadeva:* Half-human half-lion incarnation of Krishna.

*Na sukhaallabhyathe sukham:* From happiness no happiness can ensue. In case one has no misery, one cannot identify happiness.

*Nasthika:* Atheist (*Dharma Vahini*).

*'Neela thoyada madhya-sthaad, vidyullekheva bhaaswaraa, thasyamadhye vahni sikhaa':* In the centre of the blue cloud, shining like a streak of

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lightning, with the tongue of fire in its centre.

*Nidarsan:* Evidence.

*Nididhyasana:* Practising the path laid down.

*Nirvana:* Freedom, liberation from cycle of birth and death.

*Nirvikalpa Samadhi:* The superconscious state where there is no mind (*Sai Discourses*).

*Nishadas:* Inhabitants of hills and forests.

*Nithya Kalyanam, Paccha Thoranam:* Perpetual festivity, perpetually green.

*'Nithya Nirabhimana':* 'Permanent ego-lessness'.

*Nivritti:* Detachment (*Sai Discourses*).

*Nuthana:* New.

*Nyasaputhras:* Children born in order to realise the value of some deposit that they had made with you in the previous life which you had misappropriated and misused.

*Oothi:* The consequence of the activity, its impact on one's nature and career; one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas.*

*Om(kâra):* Also AUM, the *pranâva*, the highest syllable combination, whose letters stand for the fundamental trinity of *gunas, lokas, vedas*, level of realisation, names, etc.

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*Om namo nârâyanâya purusâya mahâtmane visuddha-sattva-dhisnyâya mahâ-hamsâya dhîmahi:*

'Our obeisances unto Lord Nârâyana, the great soul residing eternally in the purest of goodness, the great swan like personality upon whom we meditate.'

*Om Namo Bhagavate Vâsudevâya:*

My respects for Vâsudeva, the supreme lord (also called *dvâdasâksara-mantra*).

*Panchabhuthas:*

Five elements of the body: *akasa:* ether; *vayu*: air; *agni:* fire; *jala:* water; *prithvi:* earth.

*Padma:*

A particular high number (1000 millions or billions).

*Panchaprana:*

The five vital airs.

*Panchavati:*

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana's abode in the forest.

*Panduranga:*

A name for Vitthala, Vishnu and Krishna, which means the pure lord and leader of the Pandavas. Under this name, Krishna is adored in the city of Pandharpur, India.

*Para Vidya:*

Teaching of the spiritual science of liberation.

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*Parabrahmam:* The formless-immanence-transcendence. The universal oversoul, the absolute, 'Supreme (or transcendent) God', a synonym for Nirguna Brahman, Absolute Reality, beyond time, form and space.

*Parakayapravesam:* Entering into the body of some person.

*Param-jyothi:* The supreme light, *param-jyothi*, the higher splendour of realisation, merging his 'imagined self' into the universal self.

*Parama:* Highest.

*Parama Dharma:* Highest principle of righteousness.

*Paramatma:* The absolute from which all this has emanated, in which all this exists, into which all this merges. It is the prop for achieving liberation (see also *moksha*).

*Parasakthi:* The dynamic aspect of Divinity, the power that has elaborated god into all this manifoldness, all this variety and all this beauty.

*Parasurama:* Rama with the axe—the sixth *avatar* of Vishnu, who appeared to destroy the tyranny of the warrior caste.

*Pariksha/Parikshith:* *Pariksha* means the quest. Little Parikshith was always looking

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in the face of people for something, a familiar trait of Krishna. Therefore he was called *Pariksha-shith:* 'he who is engaged in *Pariksha*'.

*Parikshith/pariksha:* Finding out.

*Parnasala:* 'Thatch', straw hut of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana.

*Paropakaraha Punyaya, Papaya Parapedanam:* To do good to others is merit. To hurt and cause suffering to others is sin (*Discourses*).

*Partha:* Son of Earth (*prithvee*); also another name for Arjuna.

*Parvati:* Wife of Lord Shiva.

*Pasupathi:* The Lord of all *jivas, pasu* meaning *jiva;* Govinda means the guardian of cows or *jivas, 'go'* meaning jiva.

*Pat(h)ala:* One of the seven regions under the earth; the abode of *nagas* or serpents and demons. (Sometimes used as a general name for the lower regions or hells).

*Patala(homa):* *Homa:* fire-offering. A sacred ceremony in which the gods are offered oblations through the medium of fire in a sanctified fire pit.

*Payasam:* A mixture of rice pudding, milk and sugar.

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*Peddavenkappa Raju:* Earthly father of Sathya Sai Baba (Sathyanarayana).

*Pipal:* Tree considered sacred both to Hindus and Buddhists. It is also known as Bodhi tree because Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under this tree. It's a very big tree which has roots which rise from the ground and then come back to the ground and appear to be additional trunks.

*Pradarhsan:* Exhibition.

*Pralâdha:* Son of demon king Hiranyakashipu. As a boy he was beaten, trampled, and cast into fire and water. But, he saw only god everywhere, and repetition of the name saved him. Once, Pralâdha asserted that God was everywhere, and Narayana appeared in his man-lion form (Lord Nrsimhadeva) from within a pillar to destroy the king.

*Pravriththi maarga:* Path of attachment.

*Prayag:* Holy place at the meeting point of Ganga, Yamuna and the underground Sarasvathi rivers. Modern Allahabad in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Bathing here would give great spiritual blessing.

*Payasam:* Offered (sacred) food.

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Pithr devo bhava:* | Treat the father as god. |
| *Poorna ahuthi:* | Valedictory oblation. |
| *Poshana:* | Fostering, guarding, preservation from harm, one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*. |
| *Pournima Day:* | Day dedicated to the worship of the spiritual preceptor. |
| *Prahlâda:* | 'The joy of understanding', son of the *asura* ruler Hiranyakasipu but protected and saved by the Lord. |
| *Pra kanthi:* | Higher illumination. |
| *Prakrthi:* | Nature, eternal feminine. |
| *Prakrithi-Purusha:* | Creation and the creator, patent and latent. |
| *Pralaya:* | The great dissolution. |
| *Prana:* | Life breath, the vital air. |
| *Pranâva (Omkâra):* | Recitation of Vedic hymns. The sound of god, identity of Krishna being the transcendental sound AUM (OM), the primal *mantra*. |
| *Prapancha:* | The *Maya* known as *Vidya* has created the cosmos, under the prompting of the Lord. For, she has no innate force of her own. Only while in the presence of the Lord can she create the three-stranded cosmos. |
| *Prasad(am):* | *Satvic* food, flowers, etc., offered to god. All the food one is eating should be first offered to god; mercy, gift. |

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*Prasanthi Nilayam:* 'Abode of eternal peace'; the name of Baba's Ashram, 'Unshaken Peace'.

*Pravritti:* Wordly activity (*Sai Discourses*).

*Prema:* Love.

*Premaswarupa:* Embodiment of pure love.

*Premaswarupulara:* Embodiments of love.

*Prithvi:* The earth.

*Puja:* Ritual worship, honouring the Lord, ritual ceremony.

*Pulasthya:* Son of Brahma, father of Vishravas and grandfather of Ravana.

*Punya and Papa:* Merit and demerit, (*punya*) merit acquired by means of good activity, (*papa*) demerit acquired by means of evil activity.

*Puranas:* Legends, belonging to ancient times, for example *Srîmad Bhâgavatam.*

*Purana Purusha:* The primal person.

*Purandara:* Indra, the monarch of the gods.

*Purusha:* Eternal, masculine.

*Purusharthas:* The four ends of human life, righteousness, prosperity, affection and liberation.

*Purushottama:* The lord of all.

*Pushkara:* Second son of Bharata.

*Pushpaka:* An aerial chariot, Kubera's chariot used by Rama to go home.

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*Puthana:* The ogress that approached Krishna as a mother to feed him at her breast.

*Puthrakameshti:* The *yaga* prescribed for those desirous of begetting a son.

*Puttaparthi:* Name of the village in south-India where Sathya Sai Baba was born.

*Radha:* Is the *adhar* (basis) for the *dhara* (continuous stream) of *aradh* (worship). That is to say, Radha is the created universe which has to be used by man for discovering the Divinity immanent in it, the Divinity that is revealed as beauty, truth and goodness, as *sath chith* and ananda, as *sathyam sivam* and *sundaram*. Eternal companion of Krishna, personal form of his inner happiness-energy. She embodies the perfect love and devotion to the Lord.

*Raga:* Attachment, tunes.

*Raja:* Ruler; '*Yatha raja, thatha praja*': As the ruler, so the ruled.

*Raghu dynasty:* The dynasty in which Râma was born.

*Rajamatha:* The Queen mother.

*Rajasic:* Passion.

*Rajo Guna:* The quality of passion (active).

*Rakshasas:* Demons, ogres and the like, demons and demoniac powers,

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people with demonic tendencies, an ogre enjoined by Kamsa, warrior-demons.

*Râma:* Source of bliss. The principle which attracts and endears through that attraction the disparate elements in nature; name of Lord Krishna, which means 'source of all joy', 'he who pleases', name given by Vashishta to the Lord, born as the son of Kaushalya and Dasharatha, crest-jewel of the Raghu dynasty.

*Ramachandra:* Ramachandra is, as the name indicates, as the moon, which repels the burning heat and restores coolness and comfort to all. He removes the pain caused by hate, malice, greed and envy.

*Ramayathi ithi Rama:* He who gives joy is Rama. The joy in the devoted heart is the joy that pleases the Lord. The joy of the Lord is the reward that the devoted heart seeks.

*Ramakrishna Paramahamsa:* (1836–1886) Celebrated mystic; mastered all types of Hindu *yoga* and also Christian and Islamic practices. Swami Vivekananda took his message of universal religion to the west. Married to Saradhadhvee.

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*Ramâyana:* (The path of Rama): the epis about the *avatara* Sri Rama, who in his youth was exiled into the forest with Sita, his wife, who battled against Râvana, a ten-headed demoniac ruler.

*Rasa:* Thick, sweet juice which emerged from the ocean of milk.

*Rasakrida (Rasa Kreeda):* The *Raasa* dance of Krishna, with the cowherd maids (the gopis) of Brindavan; when Krishna danced in the moonlight with the maids each maid had a concrete Krishna by her side.

*Rathi Devi:* Goddess of Love.

*Rathri:* Night.

*Ravana:* Ten-headed demoniac ruler during the time of Lord Rama. *Rakshasa* Emperor at Lanka (Next were the two demons as Râvana and Kumbhakarna born from Kesinî as the sons of Visravâ and they gave misery to all the people. To relieve them from the curse manifested thereupon, Râmachandra himself came to kill them, but you better hear about the exploits of Râma from the lips of Mârkandeya, my best.

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*Rg Veda:* The collection of *mantras* or *hymns* in praise of Gods. The term Rig Veda can apply to the gods who are praised (*Leela Kaivalya Vahini*).

*Rishis (rshis):* Sages.

*Rthwiks:* Reciters of hymns, the Vedic scholars who officiated as priests, priests who have specialised in ritual lore.

*Ruksharaj (Ruksha):* The creator Brahma created a monkey form. It was endowed with great might; but, it was ever wayward in movements and activities. So, Brahma named it Ruksharaj; when it demanded to be told where it should reside, Brahma directed, 'Live in the forest, for, there you can move as your waywardness dictates. And, when you catch a *rakshasa*, kill him and save the area from his misdeeds'.

*Runaputhras:* Children born in order to recover undischarged loans given by them to the man who has now come as the father.

*Rupa:* Form.

*Ryot:* [Hindi: *raiyat*] In India a peasant or tenant farmer.

*Saandeepini:* Preceptor (guru-teacher) of Balarama and Krishna, a pundit from Avanthi, living in

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| | |
|---|---|
| | Kasi, the holy city on the sacred Ganga. |
| *Sabari:* | She received the *darshan* of Rama; Mathanga Rishi was her guru. |
| *Sabda Brahmam:* | The sky or *akasa* is the fifth elemental force, characterised by sound; sound is the symbol for *Brahmam*, known as *Sabda Brahmam*. |
| *Sadhaka:* | Spiritual seeker. |
| *Sadhana:* | Spiritual discipline or exercise; self effort |
| *Sadhus:* | Good men. Saint, who is devoted to spiritual discipline. |
| *Sadhvimani:* | Gem among virtuous women. |
| *Sagara:* | King. |
| *Sahana:* | Forbearance. |
| *Sahasra Seersha Purushah Sahasraksha Sahasra Patö:* | Myriad headed, myriad eyed, and myriad footed is the Purusha (Supreme Lord) (*Sai Discourses).* |
| *Sakku, Sakkubai:* | Whose devotion to Panduranga was so intense that the Lord himself took her form and served her husband and mother-in-law in order to release her from her home, for the pilgrimage to the Panduranga temple. A famous Krishna devotee. |
| *Sakshathkaram:* | Realisation. |

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*S(h)akthi:* Power. Female consort of Shiva. Vital core.

*Samadhi:* Concentration of the thoughts, profound or abstract meditation, intense contemplation of any particular object (so as to identify the contemplator with the object meditated upon).

*Samathva:* Equal love for all.

*Samavarthana:* Rite of giving away gifts as selected cows and costly vessels to Brahmins.

*Sambhashan(a):* Hearing about the Lord (saint).

*Sam(n)karsana:* One of the four original expansions of Lord Krsna in the spiritual world; also, another name of Balarama, given by Garga Muni. He who was attracted, drawn.

*Samsar(a):* The world of change, the constant flow.

*Samskara:* Impression, activator; sanctification, preparation. The imprints left on the subconscious mind by experience (from this or previous lives), which then colour all of life, one's nature, responses, states of mind, etc.

*Sanathana Dharma:* Universal eternal ancient wisdom.

*Sanathana Sarathi:* The 'eternal charioteer' Baba inaugurated a monthly

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magazine to convey his teachings into every home, meaning: 'The Timeless Everpresent Charioteer'.

*Sandhya:* Rite; reciting the *Gayatri mantra.*

*Sandhya periods:* Each *yuga* has 200, 400, 600, or 800 contact periods.

*Sannyasi:* Devotee of the Lord, giving up everything to be able to serve Him.

*Sandhya-vandana:* Worship at dawn and dusk.

*Santhi kamasthuhomayeth:* 'Those who desire the establishment of peace have to do this sacrifice', say the *Vedas.*

*Sanathana:* Eternal.

*Sanathana Bhagavatha Bhaktha Samajam:* Association of the dedicated and devoted.

*Sankalpa:* Resolve.

*Sankara vijaya:* The classical biography of Sankaracharya.

*Sankirtan:* Congregational glorification of god, especially through chanting of his holy name.

*Santhi:* Peace (*Geetha Vahini*). Unruffled equanimity.

*Santhi Vedika:* An eight-pillared *mantap* in classical style with frescoes of the *Githopadesh* scene and of a scene from the *Ramayana* and of the *Sivalinga* and the *Pranava.*

*Santhosham:* Happy, very happy.

*Sapthaha:* Seven days; a sacrificial performance lasting 7 days.

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*Sarabhanga:* Sage who cast off his body while gazing at Rama on a pyre of fire.

*Saraswathi:* Goddess of speech.

*Sarayu:* The river that runs alongside Ayodhya.

*Sarga:* The process of creation, one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*.

*Sârî:* Long seamless colourful piece of fabric worn by female devotees.

*Sarpastra:* A powerful (Dragon) weapon with serpent-arrows, used by Meghanada in the battle against Rama.

*Sarvabhutha-Anthar-Atma:* (Krishna is) the inner core of all beings.

*Sarvadaivathwa Swaroopam:* The form of god in all forms.

*Sarvadaivathwas-waroopalanu Dharinchina Manavaakarame Ee Aakaramu:* This human form is one in which every divine entity, every divine principle, that is to say, all the names and forms ascribed by man to god, are manifest.

*Sarvam Brahma Mayam:* All this is *Brahman*. The offering is *Brahman*, the fire is *Brahman*, the offerer is *Brahman*, the goal

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is *Brahman*. *Brahman* that is the real reality of the universe.

*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma; Na iha nana asthi kinchana:* ... lives in the constant awareness that all this is *Brahman*. He has understood that there is no manifoldness or diversity here; it is all one. He knows that the entire cosmos is constituted of the same *Brahman*, that there can be no second entity apart from *Brahman*.

*Sarvamath-asammathaya Namah:* 'Prostrations to him to whom all religions are equally acceptable'.

*Sarvam Sajivam:* 'All is alive.'

*Sarvanama and Sarvaswarupa:* All names and all forms (*Sai-Discourses*).

*Sastras:* Vedic scriptures.

*Satharupa:* The hundred-faceted. One body was transformed into two and therefore, where there was one will formerly, two appeared, one which attracted and the other which was drawn towards creation, the feminine and the masculine. Since the one attracted in a 100 distinct ways it was called *Satharupa* (hundred-faceted) and beloved of Brahma (*Brahmapriya*). The other was named Manu.

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*Sath-Chith-Ananda:* I am existence, knowledge, bliss.

*Sat(h)î:* Voluntary self-burning of women after the death of their husband. Traditional compulsiveness which has fallen into disuse.

*Sathya:* Truth.

*Sathyadeep:* Prayer hall (for example in Dharmakshetra).

*Sathya Sai EHV:* Education in human values. It is based on the values of truth, right action, peace, love and non-violence. It stresses the importance of service to society, tolerance for people of different races, cultures, nationalities and religions.

*Sathya Sai Nagar:* Suburb of bungalows where Sai devotees live.

*Sathyabhama:* The temperamental consort of Lord Krishna.

*Sathyam:* He is the substratum, the substance; the separate and the sum, the sath; the sathyam his nature and his reality are truth, light and beauty, sath, chith and ananda, existence, awareness and bliss.

*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram:* *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram* speaks of Me, as immanent in every one of you. For, *Sathyam* is Truth; you resent any imputation of untruth. The real

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'you' is *Sathyam*. How then will it accept any other appellation? So too, you are *Sivam;* joy, happiness, contentment, auspiciousness. You are not *Savam;* dead, miserable, weak; you are *Sivam*. Then again, the real 'you' is *Sundaram;* beauty, harmony, melody, symmetry. 'Follow the *karma marga* with the harmony and charm of *Sundaram;* follow the *Bakthi marga* with the exhilaration and exaltation of *Sivam;* follow the *Jnana marga* with the directness and steadfastness of *Sathyam'*.

*Sathyanarayana:* God who lives in all living beings as the highest truth. It is also the name Sai Baba received at his birth.

*Sathya annasti paradharmah:* There is no *dharma* higher than truth.

*Satwic (Satva Guna):* Harmony, *satwic* way of life: pure, equal and steady and detached. The tranquil quality.

*Satrughna:* 'The slayer of enemies', half-brother of Rama, together with Lakshmana born from Sumitra.

*Satsang:* Coming together of devotees with the purpose to listen to holy scriptures and to sing *bhajans;* good company.

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*Tapah, sauca, dayâ, sathya:* Austerity, cleanliness, compassion and truthfulness are the legs that established the age of truth (*Sathya Yuga*, the 'old days').

*Savam:* Dead, miserable, weak.

*Seemollanghanam:* The act of crossing the boundary from one kingdom into another. Kings, in former days, gathered their forces, equipped them with arms, worshipped and propitiated on *Ayudha Puja Day* (the day previous to Vijayadasami day) and, crossing their own state boundaries, they invaded the neighbouring states, eager to achieve *vijaya* or *victory*. That was on the tenth day of Dasara, the tenth or dasami day of the bright half of the *Aswija* month.

*Sesha:* Primeval serpent.

*Seshamaraju:* Baba's older brother, teacher of Telugu.

*Seva:* Loving service.

*Shiva:* Associated with creation, He is Brahma; with protection, He is Vishnu; with dissolution, He is Siva the destroyer in the trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Shiva (Rudra). The embodiment of spiritual wisdom and god of

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gods, Mahadeva, Sankara. Shiva, the deity whose bow Rama lifted to win Sita's hand in marriage.

*S(h)ravana:* The son of blind parents, who was killed by accident by Dasharatha, father of Rama.

*Sibi:* King [*Sathya Sai Vahini*].

*Siddhasram:* Hermitage of achievement.

*Siddhis:* 'Power, accomplishment; perfection.' Extraordinary powers of the soul, developed through consistent meditation and deliberate, gruelling, often uncomfortable *tapas*, or awakened naturally through spiritual maturity and yogic *sadhana*. Through the repeated experience of self realisation, *siddhis* naturally unfold according to the needs of the individual. Before self realisation, the use or development of *siddhis* is among the greatest obstacles on the path because it cultivates *ahamkara*, I-ness, and militates against the attainment of *prapatti*, complete submission to the will of god, gods and guru. Six *siddhis* in particular are considered primary obstacles to *samadhi:* clairvoyance (*adarsha siddhi* or *divya siddhi*),

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clairaudience (*shravana siddhi* or *divyashravana*), divination (*pratibha siddhi*), super-feeling (*vedana siddhi*) super-taste (*asvadana siddhi*) and super-smell (*varta siddhi*). The eight classical siddhis are: (i) *anima:* to be as small as an atom; (ii) *mahima*: to become infinitely large; (iii) *laghima*: super-lightness, levitation; (iv) *prapti:* pervasiveness, extension, to be anywhere at will; (v) *prakamya:* fulfilment of desires; (vi) *vashitva:* control of natural forces; (vii) *ishititva:* supremacy over nature; (viii) *kama-avasayitva:* complete satisfaction. The supreme *siddhi* (*parasiddhi*) is realisation of the self, *Parasiva.*

*Sima:* Area.

*Simhalagna:* The zodiacal sign of the lion—the time when Rama was born.

*Sindhuranatha:* Minister of Ravana, respected elder, far gone in years who was in close proximity to Vibhishana, when he was formerly in Lanka.

*Sita:* I am Sita, which means, cool, the cool moonlight! Wife of Rama, Sita—Goddess Mahalakshmi herself.

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*Sîta:* Wife of Rama. She plays a very important role in the *Ramayana:* She was kidnapped by the demon Ravana. Also called Janakî, as the daughter of Janaka. She was called Sîta or 'furrow' because, reputedly, she was born out of a furrow in the earth made by Janaka during ploughing, to prepare the earth for a *yajna*, to pray for offspring; that is why she received the nick-name *Ayoni-ja*, 'not born from the womb'. (Sita, without ^ means "the clarity of the moonlight", whereas '*candra*' of Râmachandra refers to the moon). Cool, the cool moonlight! Wife of Rama, Sita—Goddess Mahalakshmi herself.

*Sivam:* He is the awareness, the activity, the consciousness, feeling, the willing and the doing, the *chith;* the *Sivam*. So too, you are *Sivam;* joy, happiness, contentment, auspiciousness. You are not *Savam*: dead, miserable, weak; you are *Sivam.*

*Sivanamajapa sapthaha:* Week-long continuous recitation of the God Shiva.

*Sivarathri:* Night of Siva; *ratri* means night.

*Soham:* 'I am That'— 'I am God'.

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*Soumya:* A quality of Sri Rama, his gentle, soft and mild nature.

*Soundharya:* Beauty (*Sai Discourses*).

*Spars(h)an:* Touching of a saint.

*Sradha:* Steady dedication.

*Sravanam and Smaranam:* Listening and remembering the sacred teachings.

*Srîmad Bhâgavatam:* (*Bhâgavad Purâna*) 'The Story of the Fortunate One'. The Krishna-'Bible', spoken by Sukadeva Gosvâmî, the son of Vyâsadeva, who laid down the story of Krishna. This book of approximately 18,000 verses describes the importance of *bhakti yoga* as everything and for everybody and also the whole life of Lord Krishna and other *avatâras* of Vishnu. Contains in brief the purpose of the Vedic scriptures. Go to *Srîmad Bhâgavatam* on Internet. (Legend, 18 very old books about the history of this planet and other planets).

*Sriman Nârâyana Charanou Saranam Prapadye:* 'I take refuge in the Feet of the Lord'.

*Sriphala:* Tree sacred to Parvati.

*Srishti:* The one divine principle works through three forms, as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, in

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order to manipulate and complete the process of becoming a being, called *Srishti.*

*Sruthakeerthi:* Wife of Shatrughna, daughter of Kusadhwaja (brother of Maharaja Janaka).

*Sruthi:* (That which is heard). The *Vedas* which have come down from guru and disciple, through recitation and listening only, the *Vedas.* The four *Vedas,* which are collectively called *Sruthi,* that is to say, 'The Heard', which means, the ear.

*Sthanam:* State, the fixation of limits, and the processes by which the limits are honoured, one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas.*

*Sthithaprajna:* The person whose consciousness is calm and beyond all agitations.

*Subahu:* Son of Shatrughna.

*Subham, Subham:* May it attain fulfilment, Most welcome! Most welcome! 'O most auspicious! Fortunate are we.'

*Subrahmanyam (Murugan):* Second son of Shiva and Parvati. The Lord who protects the soul and the spiritual growth of the devotee. Also Saravanabhava, a name for Subrahmanyam, which means Lord who was born in a reed

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bush. The peacock (*paravani*) is the vehicle of Subrahmanyam.

*Sudarsana:* Literally: with ten-hundred spokes, the disc carried by the Supreme Lord.

*Suddha brahma paraath para Ram, Kalathmaka parameswara Ram:* Ram, the pure essence, the supreme beyond Ram, the time principle, the Lord of lords.

*Sudra:* A labourer; the fourth of the Vedic social orders.

*Sugriva:* Son of Ruksharaja, the ruler of the Vanara hordes (monarch of monkeys at Kiskindha), brother of Vali, residing at the Rishyamuka mountain range.

*Suka:* Sukadeva Gosvâmî, supreme son of Vyâsadeva, name of the first spiritual teacher, (*âcârya*) who spoke the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the story of Krishna unto Maharâjâ Parîkshit. *Suka* means a parrot, he was the parrot that plucked the ripe nectar-filled fruit called Bhagavatha from the tree of the *Vedas* and enabled the world to taste it and be nourished by it.

*Sulochana:* The wife of Meghanada.

*Sumanthra:* Charioteer of Dasharatha.

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*Sumitra:* Co-wife of Dasharatha who gave birth to twin sons Laksmana and Shatrughna.

*Sunayana:* Wife (queen) of Janaka, Emperor of Mithila.

*Sundaram:* He is the light, the splendour, the harmony, the melody, the ananda; the sundaram beauty, harmony, melody, symmetry.

*Suputhras:* Children born as a consequence of the blessings of god.

*Surpanakha:* Ogress, demon-sister of Ravana, whose nose and ears were sliced off by Rama and Lakshmana.

*Surya:* Sun god.

*Surya-Narayana-Murthi:* Sun god.

*Sutheekshna:* A pupil of the renowned sage Agastya.

*Suthradhari:* Krishna as the holder of the strings that move the puppets and make them act their roles.

*Svabhava:* One's own way, one's very nature.

*Swadharma:* Act in accordance with the rules of conduct laid down for the status you have risen to and the call that has come to you.

*Syamasundara:* Name of Lord Krishna, which means 'black loveliness'.

*Swarajya:* Self-mastery or independence over himself.

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*Swarupa:* True form, equal to; essence; embodiment.

*Swayamvara:* Festival for choice of bridegroom. A ceremony in which a woman selects her own husband from a number of suitors.

*Taksaka:* The king of the snakes.

*Thapas:* Ascetic practices, process of purifying the inner equipments of man in the crucible of single-pointed speech, feeling and activity, directed towards god; discipline, spiritual exercise (*sadhana*), the discipline of austerities to propitiate the gods.

*Tamo Guna:* The quality of sloth (dull).

*Tapah, sauca, dayâ, sathya:* Austerity, cleanliness, compassion and truthfulness are the legs that established the age of truth (*Sathya Yuga*, the 'old days').

*Tara:* Wife of Vali.

*Tataka:* Demoness who was killed by Rama.

*Thaksha:* Son of Bharata.

*Thâkura Haridâsa–Haridâsa Thâkura:* A great devotee and associate of Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu who chanted three hundred thousand names of God a day.

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*Thamasic:* Passivity.

*Thamaso ma*
*Jyothir gamaya:* 'From darkness, lead me unto light' Prasanthi Vahini: 'O Lord, when the objects of the world attract me, remove the darkness which hides from me the all-pervading all constituting *atma*, which every object really is.'

*Thirtha:* Consecrated water.

*Treta yuga:* Second period of a *mahâyuga*, three times as long as *Kali yuga*.

*Thribhuvana*
*Vijayam:* 'Triumph over the three worlds!'

*Thrisira:* Youngest brother of the *Rakshasas* Khara, Dushana and Surpanakha.

*Thyaga:* Renunciation, detachment.

*Thyagaraja:* 1767–1847 Tamil Nadu; great poet, composer; saint whose songs are very popular and loved in India, etc.

*Til (teel)*
*Sanskrit: tila:* Same as sesame and or the oil of sesame seed.

*Triloka:* The three worlds; *bhumi*: earth, *svarga*: heaven and patala: hell.

*Tripura:* Triple fortress; the three cities which symbolise the three *gunas*.

*Tul(a)sî:* A sacred plant dear to Lord Krishna and worshipped by his devotees. Tulsi is a sacred plant and is worshiped by many

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Hindus. Many Vishnu temples have a tulsi garden. When food is offered to Lord Vishnu or Krishna, tulsi leaves are put on each preparation offered. Indians generally keep a tulsi tree in front of their house, towards the south-east corner of their house.

*Tyaja Durjana Samsargam:* Leave association with people of evil habits.

*Udi (Vibhuti):* Sacred ash.

*Uddhava:* A confidential friend of Srî Krishna in Vrindâvana.

*Udivrishti:* The shower of Udi.

*Ugadi:* The Hindu calendar is based on lunar months. Each month is named after a stellar constellation near which the full moon of that month is sighted. The month of *Chaitra* thus occurs when the full moon is near the constellation *Chitra*. *Chaitra* is the first month of the Hindu calendar and the first day of this month begins the new year. The new year day is called *Gudi Padva* in Maharashtra and *Ugadi* in Andhra Pradesh. It is believed that Brahmâ created the world on this day. Lord Vishnu is also

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said to have incarnated himself as *Matsya* (the Fish) on this day. So people worship these deities on this day.

*Umâ Durgâ:* The personified material energy and wife of Lord Shiva.

*Upadhi:* (*Bhagavatha Vahini*) The difference between man, beast, bird, worm, insect and even a god is but a difference of the 'vessel', his *Upadhi*. That is to say, *maya* obstructs the reality; its nature is to hide the reality and make it appear as the unreal. But, Rama said, the instant the Individual discovers and knows that it is but the image of the Supreme, and that the distinction between the Supreme and Itself has no basis in truth, Maya will disappear, like fog before the risen sun. This is the genuine *atmajnan*, for, the Supreme is *Param atma* and the Individual is the same *Param atma* seen as an image in the body-with-name-and-form, the *Upadhi*.

*Upadesh:* Teaching (by Baba). Spiritual initiation, guidance.

*Upanayana:* Traditional ceremonial rites which purify and clarify the intellect, the rite of leading the pupil to the preceptor. This rite

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of initiation is called *Upanayana*, 'leading near', that is to say, taking the boy near the Guru or spiritual preceptor for (spiritual training) *Brahmopadesam* (guidance to *Brahmam*).

*Upanishad:* Receiving knowledge while sitting near the teacher, conversations between self-realised souls and their students on the subject matter. The philosophical sections of the *Vedas* (there are 108 *Upanishads*) intended to understand the personal character of the absolute truth.

*Upapandavas (Pandavas):* The children of queen Draupadi and the early deceased king Pandu.

*Upasana:* Worshipping, devotion for god.

*Upavasa:* Fasts.

*Upekhaputhras:* These are the *avatars*, with no sense of attachment towards the parents, kith or kin, with no sense of obligation of them, with love and compassion for all.

*Upeksha:* Indifference.

*Upendra:* Another name for Vâmanadeva, the Lord's dwarf-*Brâhmana* incarnation.

*Urmila:* Wife of Lakshmana, daughter of Maharaja Janaka.

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*Utkala:* The eldest son of Dhruva Mahârâja.

*Uttama:* The brother of Dhruva Mahârâja.

*Uttamasloka:* Krishna, who is worshipped by select poetry.

*Uttânapâda:* A son of Svâyambhuva Manu and father of Dhruva Mahârâja.

*Uttarayana:* The Divine half-year—the time when Rama was born.

*Vâsudeva:* When Vâsudeva enters the heart of man, *vasudeva* has no longer a place therein. In other words, when the *deva* of *vasu* or wealth is seated in the heart, the divine Vâsudeva or Krishna cannot dwell therein. Name of the supreme personality of godhead, Krishna, the owner of everything, material and spiritual.

*Vaikuntha:* Krishna's paradise, which knew no grief or loss. Literally: the place where there is no fear. The heavenly abode of the Lord. The ideal planet, the spiritual world. Vaikuntha is the place or stage of no *kuntitha* or dullness or stupidity, mutilation or misery.

*Vairagi:* Monk.

*Vairagya:* Detachment (*Geetha Vahini*).

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*Vaisakh:* It was the seventh day of the dark half of the moon in the month of *Vaisakh* on which the coronation of Rama took place.

*Vaishnavas:* Devotees of Lord Vishnu. Persons who follow the *vidhis:* no meat, fish, eggs, intoxication, illegitimate sex or gamble with money, and daily chant 16 rounds *japa* (mantra-meditation; praying in the Vedic way: *mahamantra* plus *japa-mala:* praying beads).

*Vaivasvata Manu:* An original father and law-giver of the human race. There are 14 Manus appearing in one day of Brahmâ, namely, 1. Svayambhuva, 2. Svârocisa, 3. Uttama, 4. Tâmasa, 5. Raivata, 6. Câksusa, 7. Vaivasvata, 8. Sâvarni, 9. Daksa-savarni, 10. Brahma-sâvarni, 11. Dharma-sâvarni, 12. Rudra-sâvarni, 13. Deva-sâvarni, and 14. Indra-sâvarni.

*Vaisyas:* Farmers and merchants; the third Vedic social order.

*Vali:* A great monkey king; brother and enemy of Sugriva.

*Valmiki:* Valmiki (son of Prachetas), the great poet who composed the epic *Ramayana*, to each canto, *Kaanda*. *Kaanda* means water, an expanse of water. Famous

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sage visited by Rama while in exile in the forests. The author of the original *Râmâyana*.

*Vamana:* The dwarf; the fifth incarnation of Vishnu, *Vâmana*: the Lord's incarnation as a dwarf *Brâhmana* boy.

*Vana:* Forest.

*Vanaras:* Monkey hordes, monkey-tribals.

*Varâha:* The boar-incarnation of Vishnu. The incarnation of the supreme personality of godhead as a boar.

*Varna:* One of the four Vedic social-occupational divisions of society, distinguished by quality of work and situation with regard to the modes of nature (*gunas*). See also: Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra.

*Varnasrama dharma:* The Vedic social system of four social and four spiritual orders.

*Varsha (varsa):* Area, region, country marked out by mountain ranges. There is a galactic, universal, transcendental, holistic central area named *Ilâvrta-varsha* where Lord Brahmâ sits on Mount Meru and where Lord Shiva gladdens the supreme personality. Thereto are eight more *varshas* extending to all sides, where Bharata *varsha* is

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also a name for India. (See also *dvîpa*, *Srîmad Bhâgavatam*, Canto 5, Hoofdstuk 16 en 17).

*Varuna:* The all-embracing Lord of the universe, with 1,000 eyes who overlookes the entire universe; the Lord of moral laws. Later on, he gave up his place as king of gods and gave it to Indra and Prajapati, the presiding demigod of the oceans.

*Vâsanâs:* Tendencies and impulses. Tendency on the basis of *karma*. Obstacle in one's own conditioning and experience, possibly also from former lives. Also the present awareness of previous observations. So also traumas, recollections, etc.

*Vashishta:* The preceptor (priest) of the royal dynasty wherein Rama was born, priest to king Dasharatha, a great sage and rival of Visvâmitra Muni.

*Vasu:* Wealth.

*Vâsudeva:* Literally the sweet lord, the beneficent god, or Lord Krishna as the son of Vasudeva.

*Vasudeva:* The father of Lord Krishna.

*Vâyu:* The demigod in charge of wind.

*Vedant(h)a:* The final part of the *Vedas* in which the true principle of god is described.

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*Vedas:* Sacred scriptures of the Hindu religion. The sacred scriptures revealed by the supreme being, adopted by the Hindus. There are four parts: *Rig veda, Yajur veda, Soma veda, Atharva veda*. The original revealed scriptures, first spoken by Lord Krsna.

*Vedamatha:* Providence which revealed the *Vedas*, the heritage of spiritual treasure.

*Vedanga:* Veda limb. Six branches of post-Vedic studies revered as auxiliary to the *Vedas*. Four *Vedangas* govern correct chanting of the *Vedas:* 1. *Shiksha* (phonetics), 2. *Chandas* (meter), 3. *Nirukta* (etymology), 4. *Vyakarana* (grammar). The two other *Vedangas* are *Jyotisha Vedanga* (astronomy astrology) and *Kalpa Vedanga* (procedural canon) which includes the Shrauta and Shulba Shastras (ritual codes), Dharma Shastras (social law) and Grihya Shastras (domestic codes).

*Veda samraat:* Undisputed master of the *Vedas*.

*Vedasamrakshana, Vidwathposhana and Dharmasthapana:* 'All three are interdependent; the *Vedas* are the bases of

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*dharma*; the *Vidwans* are the instruments; *dharma* is the panacea for the illness of mankind.' In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna has affirmed that he embodies himself and incarnates among men in order to fulfil the task of *Dharmasthapana*. The assurance then; the fulfilment now.

*Vedokhilo dharma mulam:* 'The Vedas are the root of *dharma*'.

*Vena:* The demoniac son of king Anga and father of king Prthu.

*Venkappa Raju:* Baba's father, Venka Avadhootha (Venka, who had given up all attachments to earthly things).

*Vibhishana:* Ravana's brother who leaves Lanka to join Rama.

*Vibhut(h)i (Udi):* Baba has often spoken of the significance of this Vibhuti. Since it is materialised out of nothing and since the ash is specifically associated with Shiva, it is reverentially known by devotees as Kailasa *Vibuthi*, the sacred Ash of Shiva who resides on Mount Kailasa. It is named *Vibhuti* since it endows one with prosperity; *Bhasma*—'ashes' because it burns away all sins; *Bhasitam*—'brightened'

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because it increases one's spiritual splendour; *Ksharam*—'destruction' since it removes danger; and *Raksha*—'protector' for it is an armour against the machinations of evil spirits. Shirdi Sai Baba gave this ash and Sathya Sai Baba materialises the ash out of his hand to his devotees as a token of blessing or for other purposes.

*Vichakshana:* Reason.

*Vidura:* A great devotee who heard *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* from Maitreya Muni.

*Vidwanmahasabha:* An all-India Academy of Vedic scholars who will strive to awaken humanity to the need to attain *Prasanthi* (inner harmony and equipoise) which has its *Nilayam* (Above) in the *Sanathana Dharma,* enshrined in the ancient scriptures of India.

*Vidwathparishath:* Assembly of scholars.

*Vidwathposhana:* Fostering of scholarship.

*Vidya:* Learning (*Leela Kaivalya Vahini*).

*Vidyamaya:* The *maya* known as *Vidya* has created the cosmos, under the prompting of the Lord. For, she has no innate force of her own. Only while in the presence of the Lord can she create the

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three-stranded cosmos (*Prapancha*).

*Vidyâpati:* An author of Vaishnava poetry who was particularly admired by Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu.

*Vijaya:* Victory.

*Vijaya and Jaya:* Two door-keepers of Vaikuntha who were cursed on account of offending the four Kumâra Rsis, and who thus both had to take birth three times in the material world as great demons.

*Vijayadhvaja Tîrtha:* A Vaishnava spiritual master and commentator on *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* in the disciplic succession from Madhvâchârya.

*Vijaya Dasami Day:* The tenth day of the light-half of the month of *Asvina*, day of victory.

*Vijitâsva:* A son of King Prthu.

*Vikshepa:* Ignorance which hides the truth, befogs the intellect, confounds reason, and clothes falsehood with the tinsel that attracts.

*Vinayaka:* A name for Ganesha, meaning: the Lord leading everyone and the Lord who clears obstacles.

*Vinaasa Kaale, vipareetha buddhi:* When disaster is imminent, the intellect turns against.

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*Vîrabhadra:* The demon created by Lord Shiva to destroy the sacrifice of Mahârâja Daksa.

*Viradha:* Viradha had been born as an ogre on earth in consequence of a curse that he had invited upon himself from his divine master, Kubera. He was one of a group of heavenly angels, Gandharvas, who were serving Kubera. Kubera had, later, taken pity on him and declared that his demonic career would come to an end the moment he met his death through an arrow from the bow of Rama. He could then return as a Gandharva to the presence of Kubera, it was said.

*Vîrarâghava Âchârya:* A Vaishnava spiritual master and commentator on *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* in the disciplic succession from Râmânujâcârya.

*Virat Purusha (Swarupa):* The universal form of the supreme lord.

*Visarga:* *Sarga* or creation in a special sense: the proliferation into manifold varieties of beings through the interaction of various oddities and peculiarities in activity, one of the ten characteristics of the *Puranas*.

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*Vishnu:* Associated with creation, he is Brahma, with protection; he is Vishnu, with dissolution; He is Shiva. The supreme lord; lord Krishna's expansions in Vaikuntha and for the creation and maintenance of the material universes, a name of the supreme personality of godhead, the creator and maintainer of the material universes.

*Visnudûtas:* The personal servants of Lord Vishnu.

*Vishnu maya:* Divine power to delude. Vishnu is used for god, since it means, 'present everywhere at all times.'

*Visnupriyâ devî:* The second wife of Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu, whom he left to accept *sanyâsa*, the renounced order of life.

*Vishravas:* Son of Pulasthya and father of Ravana.

*Visruta:* The son begotten by the Pracetâs through Mârisâ.

*Visvakarmâ:* The architect of the demigods.

*Visvâmitra:* A prominent sage and rival of Vashistha Muni.

*Visvanâtha Chakravartî Thâkura:* A Vaishnava spiritual master and commentator on *Srîmad Bhâgavatam* in the disciplic

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succession from Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu.

*Visvâvasu:* A leader of the Gandharvas, singers in the heavenly planets.

*Viswamitra:* Sage during the royal dynasty wherein Rama was born; went to forest with Rama to kill the demons that were bothering him.

*Viswa Vriksha:* A world-tree that provides shade and shelter for all humanity.

*Vittal:* This is Vittal incarnate, the merciful lord of the poor and the helpless.

*Vitthala:* A name for Vishnu and Krishna.

*Vivasvân:* The presiding demigod of the sun.

*Viveka:* Intelligent discrimination (*Leela Kaivalya Vahini*). The capacity to reason and see things in proper proportion. Discrimination between the real and unreal, between the permanent and the not, between the beneficial and the not, between truth and falsehood.

*Vrata:* Vow, religious oath. Often a vow to perform certain disciplines over a period of time, such as penance, fasting, specific *mantra* repetitions, worship or meditation. *Vratas*

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extend from the simplest personal promise to irrevocable vows made before god, guru and community.

*Vrndâvana dâsa Thâkura:* A great devotee of Lord Srî Chaitanya Mahâprabhu who wrote *Chaitanya bhâgavata*, a biography of Lord Chaitanya.

*Vrishabhendrapura:* The village where Radha lived.

*Vrtra:* A great demon killed by Indra. He was actually the devotee of Citraketu who had been cursed by mother Durgâ to take such a low birth.

*Vrithis:* Mental modes or functions.

*Vyâsa(deva):* The incarnation of Lord Krsna, the original compiler of the *Vedas, Puranas, Vedânta sûtra* and *Mahâbhârata.*

*White Umbrella:* *Satwic* way of life: pure, equal and steady and detached.

*Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavathi:* As you think so you become (Discourse: God is the Indweller).

*Yadus:* The descendants of Yadu, in which dynasty Lord Krishna appeared.

*Yaga:* One time sacrifice like the *Aswamedha* sacrifice.

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*Yajna:* Sacrifice, holy ritual, sacrificial rite, *ajna:* a name of the supreme personality of godhead, the goal and enjoyer of all sacrifices.

*Yajnapurusha:* The person who accepts the *Yajna.*

*Yajnavalkya:* Sage.

*Yaksha:* Ogress.

*Yakshini:* Female ogre.

*Yamarâja:* The demigod in charge of death and the punishment of sinful living entities.

*Yâmunâcârya:* A great Vaishnava spiritual master.

*Yashodâ:* The foster mother of Lord Krishna.

*Yashodâ nandana:* A name of the supreme personality of godhead, who is the son of Yashodâ.

*Yatho dharmasthatho jayah:* 'Where there is *dharma,* there victory is achieved.'

*Yayâti:* The king who, because of his lust, was cursed by Sukrâchârya to prematurely accept old age.

*Yoga:* Conquest of the senses.

*Yogakshema:* Acquisition and maintenance of welfare.

*Yoga vashishta:* Dialogues between Rama and the preceptor (Vasishta), also referred to as the Ramagitha.

*Yogesvara:* A name of the supreme personality of godhead, the

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supreme master of all mystic power.

*Yogi:* A transcendentalist who is striving for union with the supreme.

*Yojana:* Nine miles (approx. 13 kilometres). measures of distance.

*Yudhisthira:* The eldest Pândava, who Lord Krishna established as emperor of the entire earth.

*Yuga:* Ages in the life of a universe, occurring in a repeated cycle of four. Era or age. There is a cycle of four *yugas*: *Satya* (Kritha), *Treta, Dvapara* and *Kali.* Together, the four *yugas* comprise 4,320,000 years. The present age is the *Kali yuga.* In the first period, *dharma* reigns supreme, but as the ages revolve, virtue diminishes and ignorance and injustice increase. At the end of the *Kali yuga,* which we are in now, the cycle begins again with a new *Satya yuga.* It is said in the *Mahabharata* that during the *Satya yuga* all are Brahmins, and the colour of this *yuga* is white. In the *Treta yuga,* righteousness decreases by one-fourth and men seek reward for their rites and gifts; the colour is red and

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the consciousness of the kshatriya, sovereignty, prevails. In the *Dvapara yuga*, the four *varnas* come fully into existence. The colour is yellow. In the *Kali yuga*, the colour is black. Righteousness is one-tenth that of the *Satya yuga*. True worship and sacrifice cease, and base, or shudra, consciousness is prominent. Calamities, disease, fatigue and faults such as anger and fear prevail. People decline and their motives grow weak.

*Yugavathar:* The Lord incarnates in countless ways: He comes to close an epoch and inaugurate another—a *Yugavathar* .... but, the story of the *Yugavathar* alone is worth perusal for the advent is to restore *dharma* and moral life. The story of all the rest is but a story of distress and despair. (see also *Amsa Kalaa* and *Avathara*). The four incarnations of the supreme lord that appear in the four *yugas*, or millenniums, to prescribe the appropriate method of spiritual realisation for that age.

*Yukthi:* Means of attainment.

*Yuvaraja:* Heir-apparent, crown-prince.

*Zenana:* Room for women.

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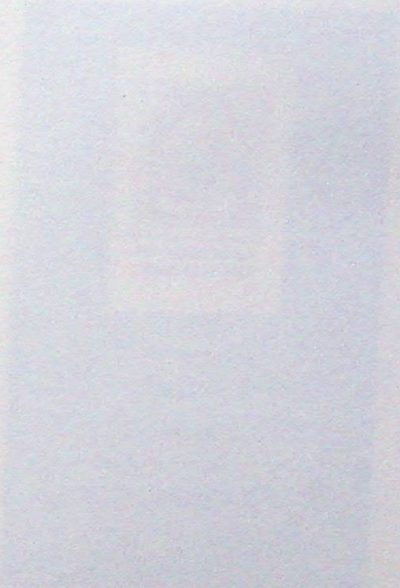

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India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage is embodied in three ancient scriptures: the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Puranas*. Though it is the *Vedas* which are the basic scriptures of Hinduism, modern Hindu religious practices are deeply indebted to the *Puranas*. Known as the saviours of Hinduism, it is believed that the teachings of the *Puranas* have not only prevented Indian society from disintegrating but also have strengthened it instead by providing it a tenacious resilience. This has been achieved by making various internal adjustments, keeping the core of the religion intact. All the religious practices of Hinduism, as they exist today, find a place in the *Puranas*. Another feature of the *Puranas* is that they encompass all aspects of human life, both sacred and secular. A scientific examination of the contents of the *Puranas*, in turn, can help us reconstruct different aspects of the society, economy, culture and the history of India. This book is a discussion of the 18 major *Puranas*. A significant aspect of the book is that it also incorporates inputs from the latest research done on the scriptures.

Raj Kumar Pruthi, PhD from Kurukshetra University, acquired his Law degree from Delhi University. Later he did certificate courses from Jawaharlal Nehru University on International Politics and from Swami Vivekanand Yoga Research Centre, Bangalore, on yoga research methods. A seasoned teacher and researcher, he served in the Haryana Education Service from 1970 to 1973, and was Deputy Director (Research) in the Indian Council of Historical Research from 1973 to 1999. At present, he is a member of the Supreme Court Bar Association. Dr. Pruthi delivered the 1993 Annual Lecture at Banaras Hindu University and Sir William Mayer's Lecture at Madras University in 1994. A celebrated author and member of national and international academic organizations, he has many outstanding books to his credit.

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